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## MY GREAT-GRANDFATHER'S WATCH

My sister passed an important milestone in her part-time career as a jeweller and watchmaker recently, when she was able to put her first 'mark' on a watch she had repaired. What made this milestone even more memorable was that the timepiece in question, a Waltham fob watch, had been originally bought and worn by my great-grandfather in the late 1880s.

When the watch finally came to my sister, it wasn't working, but after some basic cleaning and the replacement of the mainspring (the usual casualty in an inoperative fob watch) the Waltham was returned to perfect working order. And since further adjustment using generations-old watchmaker's tools, it's been keeping time slightly more accurately than my Citizen digital watch, which I bought in late 1999.

### Watches?

Why I mention this watch at all is to throw the quality of our current PC technology into sharp relief. In stark contrast to the obsolete-within-six-months-and-built-accordingly mentality of most PC hardware, this Waltham watch was built to last. And last it has: this year it turns 114 and every single person involved with its construction - not just design, but the actual construction of this specific unit - has been dead for thirty years.

Looking at the innards of the watch, it's possible to see that its engineers were looking to the future, a future that had this watch still working. Incredibly intricate systems were put in place to improve its reliability and help it withstand not only the wear and tear of normal usage, but potential damage caused by long term storage and inactivity.

It's completely clockwork of course, with no electrical components at all. All power in the watch is driven by the mainspring, which is 'charged' with kinetic energy supplied when the owner winds the crown. The mainspring in turn powers the balance wheel which provides a regular rocking motion in order to give the watch its timekeeping abilities. The balance wheel's 'rock' is powered by the hairspring, the most delicate part of the watch and the bit people are referring to when they say "never ever under any circumstances touch that bit." The hairspring's length can be changed by the adjuster (a tiny tuning-fork shaped lever) and the tension of the hairspring determines whether or not the watch runs fast or slow.

### Clever stuff

That the watch has been able to maintain its accuracy with only minor repairs is due entirely to its build quality. Let's start with the pivot heads. These are positioned at the ends of the staffs (axles) of each of the main cogs and they're made of corundum, a gemstone with a hardness of 9 (diamond being 10). Conundrum has a number of forms as a valuable gem, including ruby, which is what the gems in this watch happen to be. Waltham (and other engineers) used rubies because their incredible hardness meant the constant swivelling action of the cog staffs would not wear the pivot heads away, throwing the cogs off and affecting the reliability of the watch. The hardness also helps to reduce

friction, so when coupled with a specially designed miniature oil reservoir, the pivot heads help improve accuracy.

Speaking of accuracy, the watchmakers knew that in a precision device made entirely of metal, expansion caused by hot day would have an appreciable effect on the watch's ability to keep time. Thus was the bimetal balance wheel developed. Made of steel on the inside and brass on the outside, the different coefficients of expansion of each metal meant the wheel was able to automatically compensate for hot and cold weather - all without complex electric circuitry.

### Magneto's revenge

However, as the 20th Century marched inexorably on and magnets proliferated in day to day devices - everything from speakers to fridge doors - the balance wheel would often become magnetised and the uneven degree of magnetisation in the wheel would turn it into a virtual pendulum, drastically affecting the reliability of the watch. Later designs therefore used invar for the balance wheel, which cannot be magnetised. However, the older bimetal watch was not rendered obsolete - owners simply had to make time to have the watch demagnetised by the jeweller, usually as part of ordinary maintenance.

Finally, while all the internal structural plates of the Waltham watch are made of brass, the screws that hold it all together are made from specially heat-treated blue steel, which doesn't rust. Practically speaking this meant that when my sister dragged this watch out of the big trunk in our family storeroom and prised open the back with a butter-knife, the internals still gleamed.

Contrast this with a PC that was brought in to the RA department where I once worked, that had simply been operating in a draught from an outside door for eighteen months. When we got the back off it, the motherboard was nothing but a corroded mess, where the dust and the rust had fused into a single horrible gloop that smelled really weird. Not all PCs are like this of course, an HP in my household had its back off for the first time in three years and the innards will store-bought clean, but nobody expects it to still look like this after a century.

### PC on the other hand...

A PC is less mechanically complicated than a pocket watch. It's core - the motherboard and CPU - has no moving parts and pretty much everything beyond the cooling fans and the disc drives is made of integrated circuitry. Why then does so much stuff fail if you do something as innocuous as drop it on the floor? Why is it still so sensitive to static? I know there are all perfectly good technical reasons for these flaws, but why hasn't there been the kind of innovation we saw applied to our timepieces? Why aren't our hard drive bearings made of ruby and our keyboard pantographs made of blue steel? Is it that famous scourge of the 20th Century, built-in obsolescence? Or is it merely because PC engineers focus on bringing out the next generation product today, and neglect today's product's chances of surviving until tomorrow? Your opinions will be read with interest.



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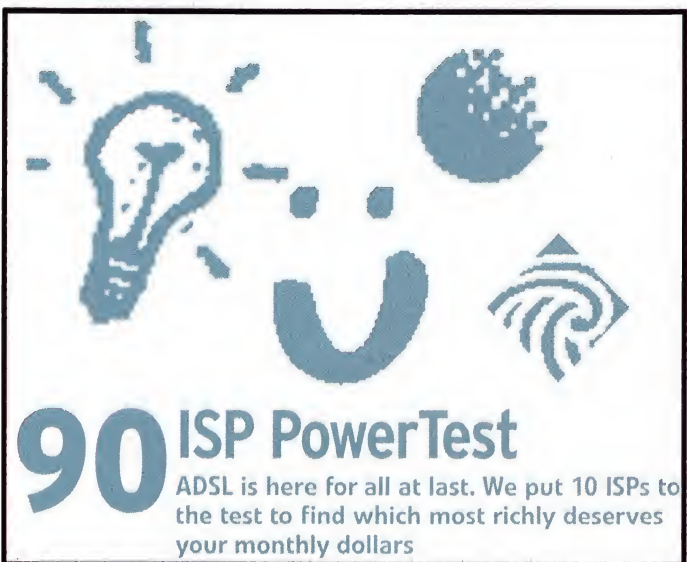
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# INBOX



He's doomed for all time now

## LETTER OF THE MONTH: Corrupted a 5 year-old

A friend of mine bought over her inquisitive five-year-old son while I was in the middle of a Quake 3 frag-fest. Attracted by the flashy colours and funny sounds, the little tyke was transfixed by the onscreen mayhem, and asked me what I was doing. Deciding that it was futile to explain the concept of percussive discipline, I simply said I was "playing a game". Within minutes, the child was on my lap and I was guiding him around Quake 3's worlds of violence, gore and insanity. It wasn't long before he was directing me on which weapon to use, which hallway to go

down, and imitating each players' taunt sounds. Here I was freely displaying a game rated MA15+ to a child well under this age bracket, essentially demonstrating to him that violence can be used as a means to an end. It made me wonder how long it would be before this child, who had just started school, displays aggressive, videogame induced behaviour in the playground. How long would it be before he starts to think of violence as not only normal, but acceptable? Hardened and rational gamers see this sort of artificial violence as just that, and use violent video games as an outlet,

source of entertainment. But show them to a generation of impressionable minds who don't know the difference and wait a few years for the lawyers to open their case with "it was only a game".

Darren Wells AKA

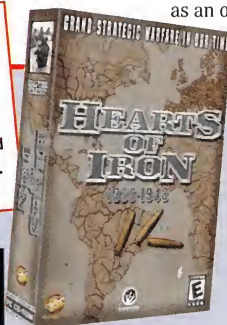
ChaoticJack

Okay so step one - you have a FEMALE friend? And she lets her children near you? Wow man you're already streets ahead of the rest of us poor saps. But to business: I think the most important thing to remember her is that computer games have violent themes because violence is a central trait of humanity: our games are the way they are because

we are the way we are, not the other way around. Something as simple as half an hour's exposure to Quake3 or a slasher film like Child's Play is unlikely to affect a normal child (borderline insane children are another matter - see the case where *Scream* caused one toddler to believe her mother was an imposter) and in any case, most videogames are so abstract and difficult to follow that many extremely young people are unlikely to even recognise them for what they are - the Quake3 avatars would not be equated with real live people. On the other hand, if a child is exposed

exclusively to Deathmatch gaming, where all playmates are defined as silent enemies who must be slain without thought or discussion, this could indeed be expected to have a long-term negative effect. But at the end of the day, a child is likely to be exposed to a huge amount of casual violence in their first three years of school, and the way they are treated by their peers and parents will have a far more profound effect than a limited amount of time in front of Q3A and a decent Net connection. Just make sure they get some fruit occasionally - scurvy is a real risk you know.

In order to repair some of the damage he's done, ChaoticJack wins a copy of *Hearts of Iron*, the all-action strategy spectacular that teaches kids ages 3+ that global warfare is bad, and that colour-coded continents are the way of the future.



### Wants better burner advice

As games cost the best part of 100 dollars and are far from indestructible, I like to create backup copies. This has been difficult of late due to anti-pirating initiatives. My 24x Acer creates coasters whenever I try to copy protected CDs. So it was with interest that I read the CD-RW review in PCPP#83. Performance focused on the writer speeds or lack thereof, yet little was said about read/write specs or compatibility with copying programs such as CloneCD. Was the test CD copy protected? The Lite-On copped a bad review due to its write speed yet is one of the few I am aware of that can successfully copy

CDs containing copy protection.

Stuart Manfregensen

Obviously Mr Manfregensen, this is sticky issue for us here in our editorial ivory tower of perfect moral judgement and ethical fortitude. Indeed, we have writers contributing to this magazine that could go on and on for pages and pages about the backup abilities of most of the major CD-RW drives currently available (thanks, Stu Calvin) but as of yet we are yet to come to a firm conclusion (or receive firm legal advice) on the propriety of us doing this. At this stage, it's very much up to the producers of these media - more draconian

copy-protection will generate more specific interest in how to live with it according to the law (the law stating you are permitted to create a backup copy) and the more interest, the more articles we'll write. Thanks for the heads up though, I'll have a chat with our Setup guru and see if it isn't time for a feature. PS: That's a fine family name you have there, although not very common in these parts, is it?

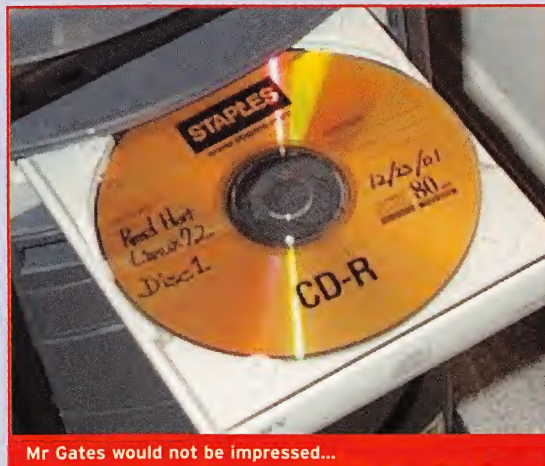
### Wants DIY Removable HDD

I have just read your review on the Maxtor 5000LE external 80GB HDD, and am a little surprised at the score. I am sure this is a great piece of hardware, but seriously, why not mention the ease and cost effectiveness of a 5 1/4" caddy and standard hard drives? My friends and I have a network of people all

with caddies (they need to be compatible brands), and find it is very easy, just power down, pull it out, then off to a mate's house. Currently Umart has a caddy for \$18, and a 80GB HDD will set you back \$202. With this consideration the Maxtor starts to look an expensive alternative (It costs \$599 - Ed). I know you can hot swap but really, with the slow speeds of these things, and the expense (you could set up almost 3 caddy/80GB systems for the price) it makes no real sense. You guys don't seem to discuss the possibilities often, so now's your chance.

Bigvis

Well and here's the thing - it's true that some products are so badly conceived and designed that they deserve nothing but open scorn, but the Maxtor 5000LE is not one of them. It's reliable, it's convenient, it works out of the box and it requires minimal configuration and of course, no screwdrivers. Some folks out there in newsagent land would



Mr Gates would not be impressed...



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**1300 360 025**





rather die than risk voiding their warranties by opening their systems, so this kind of product is for them. It's true though; the nature of the PC makes it perfect for the DIY guru, who can almost always get the same performance or functionality for a much lower price, as long as he's prepared to get busy with a wrench and, in extreme circumstances, a soldering iron. Expect more DIY-type articles in the future.

## Wonders about Doom 3's compatibility

I am worried. After doing some research on the internet and in your magazine, I had decided that the Radeon 9700 was the graphics card to complement my beast of a system. Now, I am not so sure. Doom is hands-down my favourite game of all time, and I eagerly await Doom 3. But if id isn't going to make the game compatible with ATI cards, then I will have to rethink my decision. I have always been a devout nVidia fan, and it was very difficult for me to even consider purchasing a different card, but I had been convinced - until now. Could you please, from your infinite wisdom, divulge any other information you have on this matter. Even though I am buying this system to play other games, Doom 3 is my number one priority.

Brett Carter

You'll be reassured then Brett to learn that John Carmack's plan of early February spoke of performance differences between the R300 and NV30 graphics cores, corresponding to the Radeon 9700 and the GeForceFX respectively. This implies that the Radeon 9700 will indeed run Doom 3. However, Carmack went on to note



This is not the kind of caddy we're talking about

that the NV30 is currently able to offer more 'options' than the R300 in the sense that the R300 can only run in a couple of modes, while the NV30 can support several. It's all still kind of vague at this stage, especially since drivers aren't finalised for the GeForceFX. However, initial reports suggest that nVidia's intermediate core (the FX) is less than spectacular, and that discerning users should stick with the much cheaper Radeon 9700 and wait for nVidia's true next-gen chips later in 2003. Also, don't forget that Doom 3 won't even be released until much later in the year - my advice is to buy the chunkiest card your budget can support (and Radeon 9700 is a fine choice) and then start saving for a new card should you need it once Doom 3 is finally released. Stay tuned for more in-depth videocard analysis in future issues of this magazine!

## Has concerns for our safety

It was during my second reading (cover-to-cover of course) of PCPP#82 that I picked up on this. I draw your attention to page 83: "The Matrix PC - How to build and mod your own P4 system". Arguably, a fantastic piece of work and not short of some handy tips. Now I can see the PCPP clan scratching your dials and wondering just what the hell I'm on about. I like to think that my attention to detail is above average, and I must say that the graphics utilised with this article thumped hard on my funny-bone. Working on the assumption that the hands in the photographic display were indeed that of one person, at what stage did the unfortunate individual slice his left forefinger during the component installation?

Steve Clapton

It was of course Jere's finger that received the injury. He discovered early on that the case's 'port panel' (the bit of silver that all your USB,

PS/2, parallel and Com port plugs poke through) was not compatible with the motherboard. Fortunately, the motherboard came with its own port panel. It was while Jere was stabbing at the case's port panel that he slipped, the panel came loose, and Jere's finger shot into the new hole in the case, fetching up against the sharp metal edge of the displaced port panel. The upshot of all this is that the eventual winner of the Matrix PC will be able to conduct forensic tests on the case and get a sample of Jere's DNA. And then? A CLONED ARMY TO DOMINATE THE EARTH!

## Unashamed Smartarse

In #83, Praetorians Preview: "An INTERESTING FEATURE is the ability to save your troop configuration to one of ten

spaces. For example, if you have selected a group of archers and light infantry and then are required to move a scout forward on its own, rather than having to deselect your current troop, move your archers and light infantry again, you can save your current troop configuration using the "CTRL + <number>" command and with the press of a key, you can have your archers and light infantry reselected automatically - especially handy if your units are spread widely across the map." Talk about innovation! This has been a feature of every RTS I can remember since the days of Command and Conquer! And I'm a young gamer, so maybe longer. I'm a smart-arse too, could you tell? Hoffy197

Yeah yeah, so Asher has a style that is unique and all his own. Perhaps he was being a smartarse too, now did you think of that?

## FROM THE FORUMS: BF1942 Junkies Anonymous

In the absence of crazy Eminem-based conspiracy theories, howling rants at the OFLC or links to nude Cate Archer patches, the usual suspects on the PCPP forums instead turned their comic genius to the sticky issue of BF1942 overload... [www.pcppowerplay.com.au/forums](http://www.pcppowerplay.com.au/forums)

Posted: Jan/31/2003 1:21pm  
You know you've been playing too much Battlefield 1942 when:  
\* You jump in any plane, car, tank, ship, submarine and operate it... badly.

\* You can apply first aid to yourself while running.  
\* You honestly believe you can drive your car into any garage and it will magically be as good as new after a few seconds.  
\* You shoot up your friends' cars if they get in before you.  
\* You tie a parachute to your back in case an explosion goes off nearby and you are flung into the air.  
\* You walk into hospital seriously injured screaming "medic" and the staff ignore you and run around aimlessly.  
\* You join the army and for some reason your company gets issued with weapons from another country altogether.  
\* You get shot but don't bleed.  
\* Wherever you go planes and vehicles seem to crash for no apparent reason.  
\* You hang around at the bottom of flagpoles waiting for the flags to change colour.

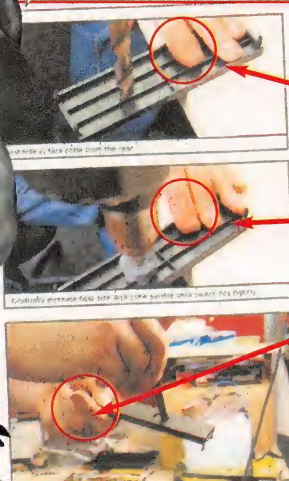
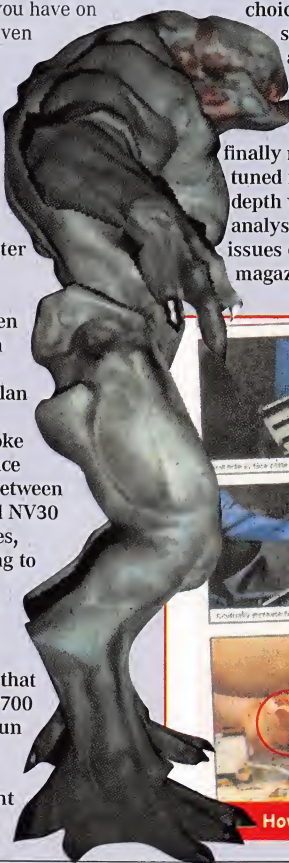
\* You play in a sporting event and half your team hangs around the locker room waiting for new equipment to arrive while you are getting hammered by the opposition.  
DemonKing, Peon

Posted: Jan/31/2003 10:05pm  
Your girlfriend leaves you, you lose your job, your computer melts down, you've eaten pizza for a fortnight, you suffer from arthritis, your pet dog has died and your family disowns you. So you throw a grenade at your feet and wait to respawn.  
hoiyes, Peon

Posted: Jan/31/2003 11:38pm  
You start to believe BF1942 even remotely captures true WW2 combat  
Gladiator, Peon

Posted: Feb/03/2003 9:41 pm  
Phreaking Heck!! I've just started to feel pangs of pain in my fingers. I may yet have a lawsuit to fall back on! Though I can probably blame the Desert Combat mod for this (it rulez!).  
AmazingJas, Triefling

Posted: Feb/04/2003 2:07am  
\* Whenever you leave your house you search the skies for base rapers  
\* You jump at a moving car thinking you will automatically appear magically inside  
\* You yell out "Smacktard!" to anybody waiting for a car longer than 10 seconds  
Neon Razor, Hitman



Careful observation will reveal Jere's injured finger, sliced open by injudicious handling of a cantankerous port panel on an expensive case. And yes, the winner of the Matrix PC will therefore have a sample of Jere's DNA.

How not to build a PC and not hurt yourself



## CLASSIFIEDS - HELP WANTED

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# X2 - The threat

Developer: Egosoft ■ Publisher: TBA ■ Distributor: TBA ■ Due: Third/Fourth Quarter 2003

## Could this be the best space trading sim since Elite?



X2 - beyond  
what's written in  
the manual!

```
001 while 1:do
002   wait randomly from 100 to 200 ms
003   skip if [HOMEBASE] ...
004   return null
005   ship if [Station] -> exists
006   break
007   if [ENVIRONMENT] -> Station ...
008     ship if [Homebase] -> 0 ...
009     ship if [Homebase] -> 0 ...
010     [HOME] -> [HOME] -> get free amount of wire found in wire container
011     [HOME] -> buy some units of wire to a max. price of [Homebase] Cr
012     [HOME] -> fly to Station Station
013   end
014   Fly home if possible
015   while [ENVIRONMENT] -> [Homebase] ...
016     wait randomly from 100 to 200 ms
017   end
018   return null
019   [HOME] -> fly to home base
020 end
```

Script Editor

**R**ejoice Space Sim fans for it seems our era has come upon us. The last two years has certainly been the time of the RPG but this has been to the detriment of other genres, particularly the "old faithful" of computer gaming, the space sim. With the imminent release of Freelancer and the recent announcement of X2 - The Threat, fans can rest assured that the space sim, for the time being at least, is making a healthy comeback.

Fans of the original X know that what made this space combat trading game

so special was the introduction of factories and the ability to make your own empires consisting of space stations, resource gatherers, shipyards and other building types. Actually, this factor of the game made for an interesting combination of real time strategy and space-fighter combat which successfully immersed the player into a very busy, very active world.

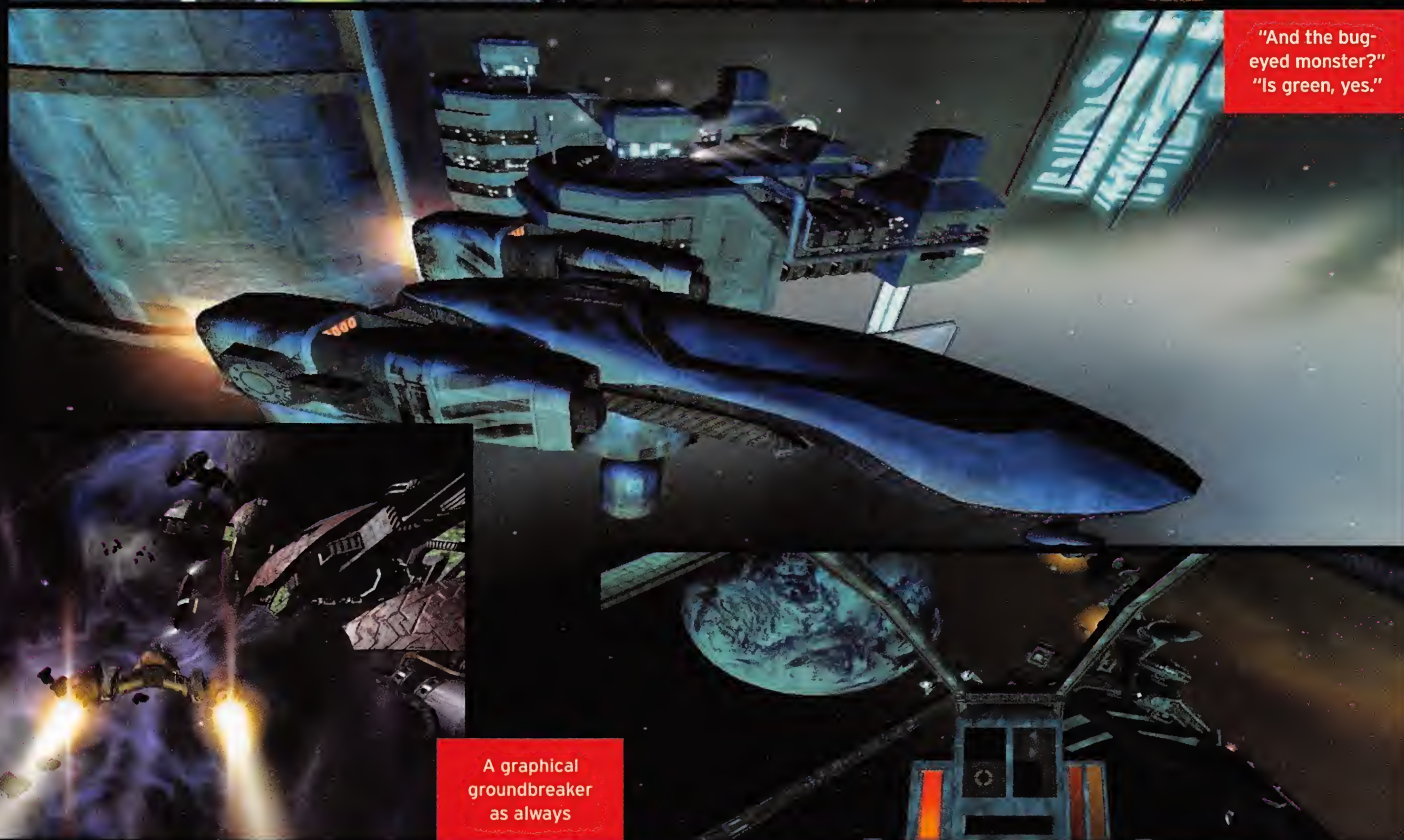
### Complex Economy

X2 extends upon this in and now the entire economy of the universe is completely active. What this equates to is the most

immersive space trading game, ever. This real economy is significant because it means that prices in a space station will actually reflect the demand for the good and not just be priced randomly as every product for sale in the game has to be manufactured first. The raw materials which have to be mined from asteroids among other potential



"And the bug-eyed monster?"  
"Is green, yes."



A graphical  
groundbreaker  
as always

### Why X2 deserves a second look

New economic model

AI scripting language

Dramatically improved graphics

Will be here long before Braben finishes his next game







resource gathering points are transported to a factory where it's made into a product. That product then has to be shipped to a space station or trading outpost by a cargo ship and you will only be able to unload your manufactured goods if the station sees a demand for it and can afford it.

The dynamic virtual economy is also quite interesting in that if you wanted to have a more "Mafioso" style hold to the universe you can directly influence the economy in your favour. For example, if you wanted to make sure there was always a high price for a good you're producing then by destroying your competitors trade ships that carry the said item then the price will go up and you'll make an, errr, killing.

Those who were lucky enough to play the original X will remember that as fine a game as it was, there were some problems with ship automation and it wasn't uncommon to have freighters and cargo haulers wandering around aimlessly as opposed to selling your goods for continuous profit. To address this, Egosoft is incorporating an AI scripting language into the game that allows you to fine-tune the behaviour of automated fleets, freighters, turret platforms and space stations. Scripts are also completely safe for your system and will be sharable across the Internet to allow for community development of the entire AI process.

### **Ships of ..Lego**

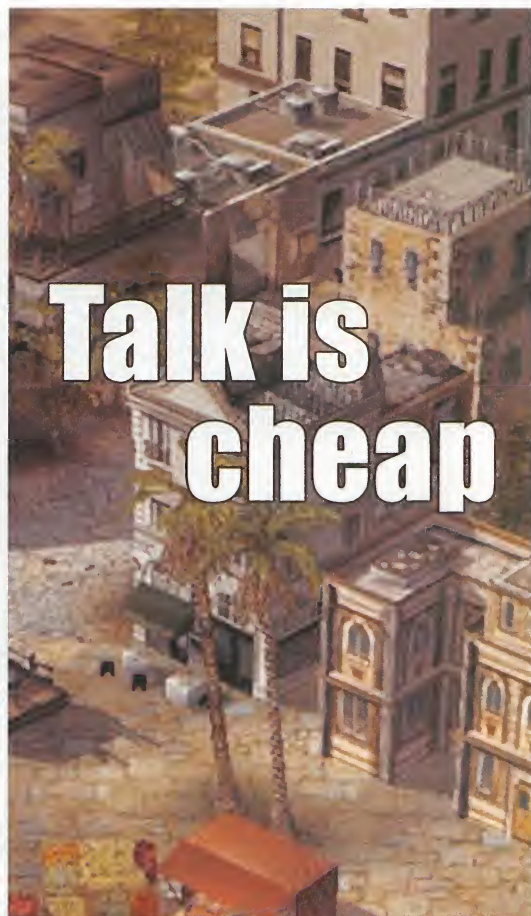
Another major upgrade is that instead of just a single seat ship available to you, X2 will allow you to fly over 70 different types of ship from small one-man fighters to huge capital ships decked out with banks of turrets and huge amounts of cargo space. Extending upon this is that you will even be able to make your own ships thanks to the "LEGO" style construction model that allows the combination of different parts from different races to make your own completely customised ship.

The story is set 20 years into the future from the original X and you're still trying to figure out who you are (in the original you were a test pilot for earth) and how best to exploit the part of the universe you're now in for maximum profit. Looking graphically awesome and offering one of the most comprehensive economic models of any space sim, X2 looks like it could be a very satisfying Elite experience indeed.

**Jere Lawrence**



Massive installations to disintegrate!



# Talk is cheap

COMMAND & CONQUER  
**GENERALS**



# Wage War!



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# Crashday

Developer: Moon Byte ■ Publisher: TBA ■ Distributor: TBA ■ Due: Q2 2003

A driving game made for people like me.



What do you mean you won't register me?

While some of you are happy to drive around the same old track hour after hour in a racing sim, I must confess that my often waning attention span within a driving game leads to some rather wanton destruction on the race track. The fun, for me anyway, isn't measured in lap times or perfect cornering but rather doing the race in the opposite direction. Or in a Daytona game, the truly "leet" driver wins by the size of the pile up, or even better though nigh impossible, being the only car remaining.

Destruction derbies seem to sum it all up perfectly. Some people like to watch cars go round and around really fast; others like to watch them get smashed up. Crashday therefore will be best suited to the latter but even the most hardened racing freak is probably going to have a blast with this game. The goal was simple, to create a stunt racing game that mixes the adrenaline inducing action of Carmageddon but with more stunt work that includes loops, jumps and other surprises.

## Crash or crash through

The premise of Crashday is that you have to compete with five other opponents in street races and battles. Relatively

freeform, different game modes have different goals: there's your standard demolition derby where you have to wreck all your opponents' cars; stunt tracks that have to be completed within a certain time limit and standard

racing. There should be plenty more to do but for now but developers are remaining tight lipped about other game types. They have however confirmed that there will be a story mode campaign where you will travel to an exotic and amazingly detailed ...video shop where you will meet Gerd, who just so happens to need new and exciting material for his store and videos your stunts for later rental.

Ok, so the story is a little, lacking, but the engine that will "drive" this game is a far more polished piece of work. Using real-time vertex deformation and damage texturing, Crashday is claiming to offer the most detailed damage model for a driving game, even those available for

Damn kids and their kooky exploding caltrops!



Get outta my whey!



Developing a responsible attitude to the police



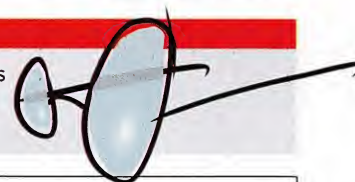
## Why Crashday Deserves a Second Look:

Realistic damage model

Stunts, races and crashing

Low overhead custom 3D engine

Stunt racing games are few and far between on PC







Phatness. Just  
get out of my  
FACE!



consoles. Ranging from sports cars to jeeps and vans all the cars have differing physics and different centres of gravity. A low to the ground sports car is harder to flip over than a van and the jeep (Humvee is the most likely) will be quite a bit heavier and more damaging to all of your opponents.

### Guns, Guns, Guns

A nice and relatively innovative feature to the game is that customisation is entirely possible. For purists that want straight demolition/stunt action the game can be played as a car sim but for those that need guns, they will also be catered to. A selectable option, weapons will allow for even greater mayhem in destruction derbies and for shooting the opposition off the road in checkpoint races Wipeout style.

Graphically the game is looking quite impressive and the good news, particularly for those with slower machines is that Moon Byte are claiming their PropsFXEngine can render a map up to 80 x 10,000 tiles and will look really cool yet still run at a very competent speed on a PIII 500.

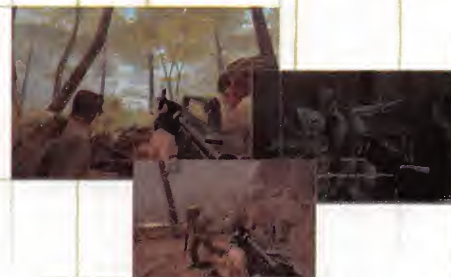
It's been a long time since we've been given the whole stunt driving experience a la Hard Driving and with Crashday those thirsty for this style of game should be satiated. Numerous jumps, loops and insane stunts makes for an appealing scenario which hopefully Moon Byte will deliver as a compelling, adrenaline inducing, crash past the chequered flag kind of game.

Jere Lawrence



This is my  
other car. It's  
also black.

The first  
casualty of  
war...



...could be  
you.

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# GAMENEWS

**HEADLINES:** Canada gets Simulated ■ New console wows nobody ■ PCs on the rise ■ Medal of Honor in Vietnam ■ Worms in your face ■ Internet see the luck of the Irish ■ There goes the neighbourhood

## VIRTUAL VANCOUVER

### SimCity inspires Fat Cats to cure Canada's ills



**G**ames entertain and educate, sure, but one group of researchers are also using them as a crystal ball with serious implications for the notion of informed democracy. In the early 90s Dave Biggs and Jim Robinson realised that their city of Vancouver was heading for disaster. It faced water pollution, unplanned sprawl, smog and over population. In short, it faced the problems of most big cities. Biggs and Robinson, both researchers, had the data that would show that things would go horribly wrong but politicians and the public couldn't see the big picture and even if they could, no one could agree on what should be done.

Then SimCity was released. Seeing the success of EA's town planning dynasty, Biggs and Robinson decided to put their raw data to good use in a game of their own.

With the help of the University of British Columbia's Sustainable Development Research Institute, QUEST was born. QUEST is a web-based game which borrows heavily from SimCity and allows users to set land use zones, air and water pollution limits, health and education spending, forestry, transportation models, taxes and so on. Once your choices are made - which can take half an hour to three hours - the program generates a picture of what the Georgia Basin, including Vancouver, would be like in 2040.

From there you can backstep to each decade on your road to hell and tweak things to produce your ideal city and surrounds for 2040.

The model of cause and effect is very serious and is based on input from experts in several disciplines and the project partners include the Environment Canada Georgia Coordination Office; National Research Council; British Columbia Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection; David Suzuki Foundation; Shell Foundation and several universities.

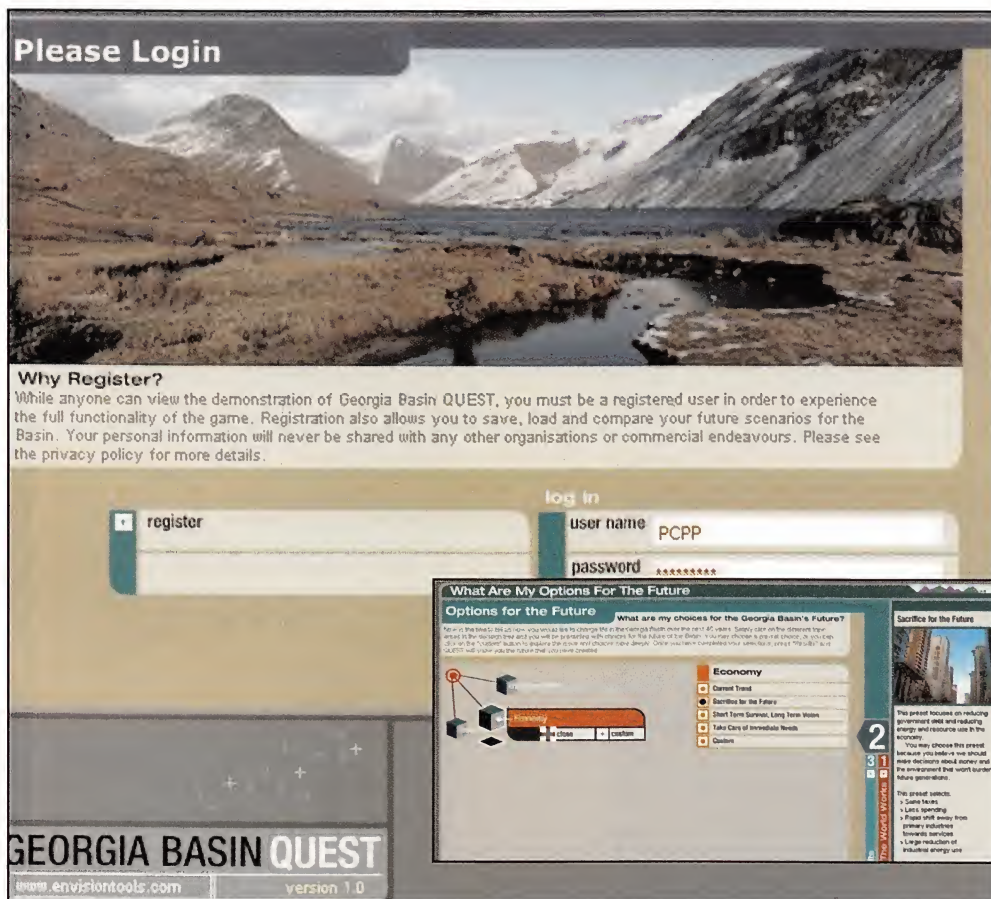
The game is more than just SimVancouver, it assumes different world views and priorities for its users and the first screen is titled "How Does the World Work?". While the identity of users is kept private all this other data goes in for some serious crunching.

One of the most interesting findings is that whatever your world view, and political posturing, people have a very similar idea of the ideal city of 2040 and when they see what they have to do to get there, most sacrifices and concessions are strangely similar. Environmentalists are forced to provide for the people of the city while more industrial types are forced to consider where their grandchildren will be playing.

More than 30,000 people have played the game to date and shared their vision of urban paradise. This unified vision of the voting public is being shared with the government.

The World Bank is now funding a similar project for beleaguered Mexico City and governments in Brazil, India and Romania and Bali are trying to use the game to involve people in answering the questions planning their cities.

Canada's ski resort Mecca, Whistler, is taking things one step further. The town council is using QUEST at town meetings to help long-term planning and intends to adopt the will of the people into law.





# PHANTOM



## New console with PC architecture aims to challenge Xbox, but is it for real?

**O** nfinium Labs is making a bold move: it's trying to bust into the console gaming market, without a billion-dollar megacorporation behind it and without any previous gaming cred.

Its console, the Phantom, is trying to shake up the way we look at gaming by actually implementing technology that the PC and console industry have been debating for years.

The Phantom is a broadband console. It doesn't have a CD or DVD drive - all of your gaming needs will be downloaded, everything from system updates to patches and the games themselves. Using credit online allows players to order games or pay-to-play from the well-worn spot in front of the TV.

Infinium claims to have the support of major games developers and boasts that its system is based on open standards which will allow Phantom players to connect to online services designed for PCs and play against the people they find there.

In fact, the company says there are currently 32,679 retail games in the market at the present time and it is negotiating to make all of them available for online distribution. It would appear that the Phantom will be more of a

delivery system than a stand-alone console. This content delivery might very well revolutionise the way we think of games shopping - if it works.

The Phantom will have a tiered subscription service to cater for casual and hardcore gamers, offer game demos to try before you buy, offer individual game rentals as well as sales, feature a parental games lock and have a selection of pre-loaded games.

The current designs show something very sleek and modern and all of the accessories are slated to be wireless (including keyboards and mice).

No information has been released about pricing or specific specs but a US release is scheduled for late 2003, with Europe and Asia to follow.



Dreamcast couldn't fool the clue bouncers at this club

## PC HARDWARE MAKES A COMEBACK

Games may be down, but the big beige box is enjoying a new renaissance

**T** he year 2001 saw the PC industry hit a bit of a slump after the boom of 2000. In Australia 2002 showed much more promise with sales growth in the each of the four quarters and 9.5% growth for the year.

The year ended strongly with 8.3% of the increase coming in the fourth quarter. Notebook sales were up an impressive 22.7%, leaving only 6.4% for desktop PCs.

These Australian results reflect a world-wide trend and the Semiconductor Industry Association is taking this as a sign pointing to a recovery in the global hardware market and analysts are predicting five to seven percent growth for 2003.

In other hardware figures: we bought most of our systems from Hewlett-Packard with 20.4% of the market, followed by Dell with 11.6%, and then IBM at 7.8% and Acer just behind on 7.7%. Viva PC!



Donovan's new business folded quickly

BYTE SIZE

### SWAT CALLING

Boulder, Colorado: SWAT teams evacuated neighbours, rerouted traffic and entered a man's home after a maintenance worker heard loud threats and saw a man waving a gun. It turned out to be a BB gun and the "bitch" that the man was threatening to "kill" turned out to be his stubborn PC. Been there.



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enlightenment age

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French

German

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Incans

Koreans

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Mayan

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multiplayer

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50+ technology research

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diplomacy

campaign

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# MEN OF VALOR: VIETNAM

## More misspelled gaming from US creators of Medal of Honor

**V**ivendi has announced that the creators of Medal of Honor: Allied Assault are working on a new war experience.

This time they are moving to the jungle and guerrilla warfare of Vietnam. Players will once again be taken into brutal conflict and they will be accompanied by a host of characters that will make up their platoon, many of whom won't make it out alive.

The story will follow players through many of major conflicts

of the war starting with missions clearing the area around the Danang airbase to the Tet Offensive and counter attack on Hue.

Besides the standard singleplayer experience players will also have the choice to play the whole game co-operatively with friends. The other familiar competitive multiplayer modes will be available and, naturally, players will be able to take the North Vietnamese army and Viet Cong into the field. Men of Valor: Vietnam is scheduled for 2004.

Bringing the drum kit on the endurance hike proved a crucial error



### BYTE SIZE

## SKYCAR ROCKS!

Moller International has put its prototype flying car up for sale on eBay. Moller has flown this experimental car on tethers for several tests since 2001, but the company warns the Skycar hasn't been approved as a road vehicle and should be classified as an experimental aircraft since they are selling it in operational condition. Free flight probably isn't a great idea with this model, but Moller is working on a new prototype for just such a thing.



Wacko Jacko's final solution



### BYTE SIZE

## INTERNET DEMOCRACY

In the Swiss town of Anieres 44% of voters cast their vote over the Internet. The vote was the first of its kind in Switzerland and perhaps, the world. Internet voting in the small town was a part of a test case for e-voting to encourage more people to participate in democracy. Each e-voter had to use a 16-digit number just to access the system. Then they had to enter their name, birthplace, birth date and a second verification code sent out separately by post. The world of Dr Who comes closer every day.



# WORMS IN 3D

## The classic take on the original Scorched Earth takes the next step

**T**eam 17's strategy game Worms has stepped into 3D. The Team has defended the controversial move citing it gives more tactical options.

The format promises deformable terrain, caves, holes, multiple levels, tunnels, and buildings all in 3D.

The 3D version of Worms will also feature snow, rain, day and night, a first-person view, as well as a tactical "blimp view", new game modes and a Wormopedia. Rest assured though, the game will keep the screwball weapons, strange little movies, balance of judging trajectory and launch power as well as the turn-based team-combat. Finally, explosive Grannies come in 3D!

# FASTEST BROWSER

## The Irish confound critics with world's fastest web client

**A**ndan Osmani took out the prize at an Irish exhibition for young scientists for his Internet browser.

Osmani is still at high school and the 16-year-old spent a year and half coding the system called XWEBS. The software was tested by the Dublin University College and it was found to boost speeds by between 100 and 500 percent with a standard 56K modem and telephone line.

Osmani says that a six-time increase is about as far as he could go with his technology without crashes. His browser also includes access to 120 search engines, music, video and DVD players - the DVD player has a side window for surfing and

watching the movie - and a virtual helper named Phoebe who can even read out e-mails and some web-pages.

Not surprisingly, Osmani has since been approached by several tech companies.



The champ was assured the superglue could be dissolved by common kitchen solvents

### BYTE SIZE

## SLIMDRIVE



Cadbury's new wafer break was considered too crunchy

A plastic card about the size of a credit card that can hold between 100Mb to 5Gb is targeted for a release sometime this year. The ultra-thin StorCard is projected to cost around \$30 and the corresponding reader coming in at \$200. It will even come with a metallic strip to be compatible with standard credit card readers. The card contains not only the disk, but a chip that handles real-time encryption of data for security purposes.



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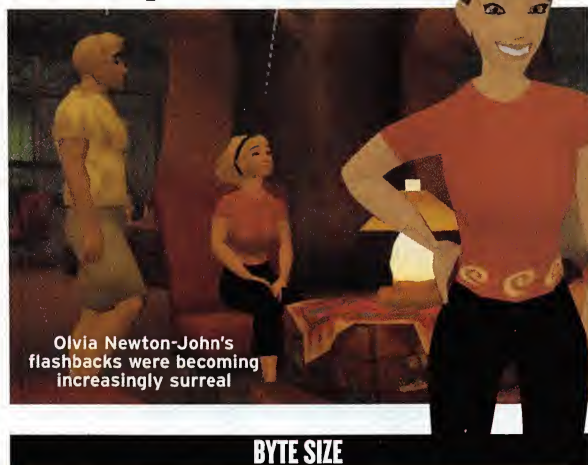
<http://www.ozforces.com>



# THERE THERE

## Where? There.

### New non-violent MMORPG is the place to be



Olivia Newton-John's flashbacks were becoming increasingly surreal

BYTE SIZE

### SOUTH AFRICAN GPL

The South African government has opted to move to open-source software where possible. The State IT Agency has decided the billions spent on software could be better spent developing software domestically. Sources in Johannesburg say departments using open source have had more up-time and better security than their commercial counterparts.

# MONOPOLY ON HORIZON

## EA and Microsoft move to buy everything in the whole world

**E**lectronic Arts made a \$2 billion shelf filing with the Securities and Exchange commission in the US, allowing them to raise massive amounts of money in the blink of an eye. According to the documents the money is for R&D or acquisitions.

It's likely that EA will snap up small publishers with money woes but bankable licences, yet the most radical rumour is that EA plans a bid on Nintendo giving it not only more games but a console of its own.

Microsoft has been on the look out for games developers ever since its launch of the Xbox and after the rumour that it had acquired Rare turned out to be true many industry insiders are taking the rumblings that Microsoft might be looking at Vivendi's game arm very seriously. Vivendi has Blizzard (WarCraft, StarCraft, Diablo), Sierra (Half-Life, SWAT) and online licenses for such properties as Marvel comics all under its impressive belt.

**I**n an industry that bemoans games all being the same, There marks another move from the notion that massively multiplayer worlds have to equal levelling up and competition. In fact, the makes of There don't like to call it a game at all. According to There Inc, its product is a "virtual environment". The thinking is that a game implies rules and objectives whereas the massively multiplayer world of There is more a place to hang out, kind of like that rich friend's house with the cool TV and spa.

You log on and just chat, re-enact scenes from your day and generally just hang out. Then there are the toys. If you want to you'll be able to play with the racing sims or kid around on the hoverboards, take on the role of a fictitious character, go on an adventure or solve a puzzle - it's totally up to you. The emphasis moves from playing a game

with social aspects to socialising with some games around to spice things up.

There will feature Therebucks which you can buy with real money to spend on things in the virtual world. You will also be able to earn Therebucks by helping to run the game by doing things like greeting newbies or moderating message boards; creating and selling items; running a business like a bar or hoverboard rental or just buying and selling items for a profit at the There auctions.

This might seem like a system doomed to place all the power in a few hands but as the developers point out, There isn't a game with a scorecard, it doesn't matter who controls what as long as there's stuff to do while you're hanging out. There is currently in beta testing and is said to launch in the coming months.

# IMPERIAL WARS

## A new concept in metagaming allows players to bend the rules



The Imajica fanclub freaked the locals

BYTE SIZE

### CHEATERS PAY

Codemasters has started charging players, in its native UK, for game cheats. You can either phone up a number at premium rates or pay online using a credit card. The cheat codes are personalised to your save games. The codes don't cost much, but gamers used to cheating for free aren't too happy. Codes are currently available for TOCA Race Driver, Colin McRae 3 and LMA Manager 2003.

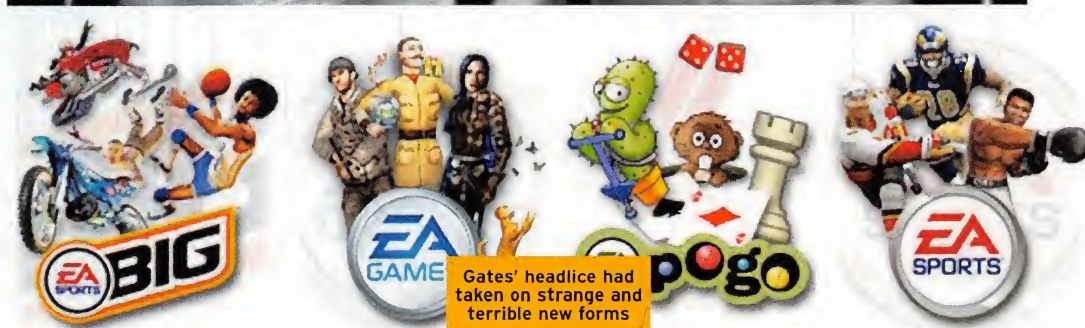
**I**mperial Wars isn't a turn-based massively multiplayer online game; it's an episodic online game, or so say the developers. The idea behind the 16-player game is that it becomes episodic rather than turn-based based on the "metagame" concept.

Metagame elements are described as all the factors that make a game enjoyable which are outside the standard rule mechanics. These elements are things like bluffing, the dip and chips tradition, wearing funny hats with green visors and all the chatting that goes with, say, a poker game.

The metagame elements of Imperial Wars are a step above the usual chatroom elements including an inbuilt messenger and an address book that adds the addresses of players as you meet them in the game.

The folks at Intelligent Life Games have put an emphasis on the between-turn wheeling and dealing, making friends, developing strategies, and learning to gauge your friends and foes.

Imperial Wars is not persistent and each game is discrete and ends with a winner. After each game Intelligent Life hopes that players will hook up with a new bunch of players - bolstered by continuous content updates - and try it again, all the while paying fees, of course.



Gates' headlice had taken on strange and terrible new forms



# Tom Clancy's **RAINBOW SIX 3 RAVEN SHIELD**



11:17AM  
HOSTAGE THREATENED

11:19AM

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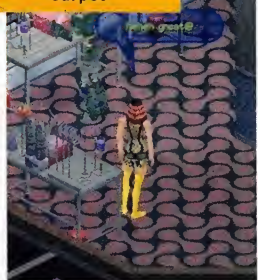


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The party was over when Bob realised he clashed with the carpet



# SIMS ONLINE ALMOST FLOPS

## The biggest thing in online gaming turns out not to be

**T**he Sims Online seemed like it would be a runaway hit but it would appear that EA's sure bet isn't pulling the expected masses. Even with coverage on shows like the US's 60 Minutes and the cover of Newsweek magazine the Sims Online only sold 105,000 copies, which is about a quarter of the initial shipment.

Players and reviewers around the world have been complaining that there's just not enough to do, and Maxis has been working around the clock to add more content. EA has also dropped the price in the US from \$39.95 to \$29.95.

With the Sims topping charts after its PS2 release and plans for the other consoles, it's obvious that the game still has life, but EA's plans to capture 10% of the 8 million players worldwide for the Online version were wildly optimistic and they now hope for half of that number by December.

EverQuest has taken three years to reach its current subscription base of 435,000 users so even EA's revised numbers are still phenomenal.



# INTERACTIVE ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

## The usual suspects get another round of accolades



**T**he Academy of Interactive Arts and Sciences has announced the finalists for its Interactive Achievement Awards.

The nominees for best PC game are: Age of Mythology, Battlefield 1942, Medal of Honor: Allied Assault, Neverwinter Nights and Warcraft 3.

In the overall Game of the Year category, Battlefield 1942 is facing some stiff opposition from the PS2 megahit Grand Theft Auto: Vice City and Metroid Prime from the Gamecube.

The AIAS is drawn from industry professionals and has representatives from Activision, EA, Microsoft, Sony, Infogrames, Nintendo as well as prominent developers on its board of directors. By the time you read this, results should just about in so have a look at [www.interactive.org](http://www.interactive.org) if you are interested at seeing how your favourites fared.

# N-GAGE ENTERS THE RING

## Nokia squares up against Nintendo

**N**okia has decided to try the handheld game market. The Nokia N-Gage is a combination of handheld game platform, phone, e-mail and web browser, MP3 player and radio and Nokia has already signed up Tomb Raider, Red Faction as well as Major League Baseball and more.

The N-Gage is a mere 13 cm by 7 cm making it a decent pocket size and the mobile phone technology means four player wireless network play is possible.

There is little chance that the N-Gage is going to hurt Nintendo's saturated Gameboy Advance market, but the nifty device marks yet another step in technological convergence.

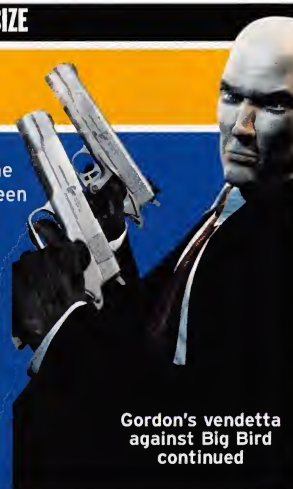


BYTE SIZE

## HITMAN MOVIE

It looks like Hitman will be the next game to get the big screen treatment. IO Interactive has revealed it's working on Hitman 3 and the game should be released at the same time as the movie.

Eidos is handling Hollywood and after Tomb Raider, Paramount seems like the studio of choice.





**"...I found that the guy had wiped my original HDD with my system on it!"**

**"...the long and the short of it is I should've backed up my files..."**

**"...because you never know what's going to happen."**

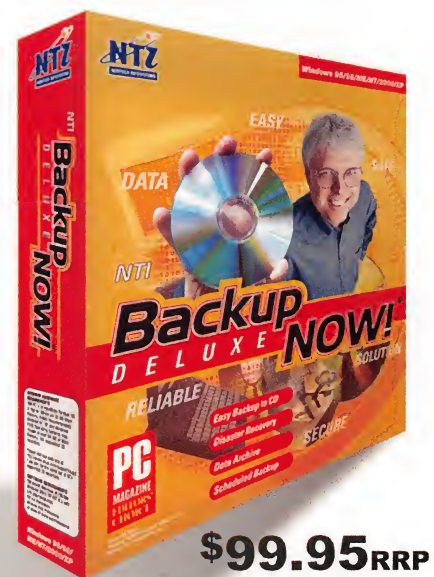
*Ben Breece, PC Powerplay, Feb 03*

Check out the letters section of PC Powerplay Issue #83, page 10.

Poor Ben Breece lost everything because he didn't backup!

Yep, patches, mods, games, cracks, drivers, high scores, saved games the whole lot...GONE!

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# GAME CHASER

Welcome to the section where we give you a brief rundown on ten games that have recently crested the horizon, but don't quite warrant the full preview treatment. Many of these games don't yet have distributors in Australia, so there's a chance we may never see them washed up on our pristine beaches. But if we know about them, and make enough noise, well who knows...

With Timothy C. Best



## APOCALYPTICA

God's very own heavy-weapons cyborgs

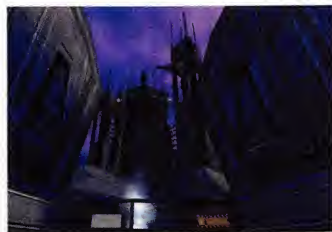
Developer: Konami Europe ■ Publisher: Konami ■ Distributor: Infogrames ■ Due: Q2

Apocalyptica promises a story of biblical proportions and we're talking Revelation here. In this game, Satan rears his horny head on Earth and God whoops his arse with purifying flames, which keeps him under wraps for a thousand years before he arises again as Neo-Satan.

With God on holiday or something, it's up to you and your team to defeat the Prince of Darkness once and for all. The gameplay will combine 3rd person shooting and beat-em-up style hand to hand combat.

The developers promise an online co-operative mode along with the standard campaign missions. The singleplayer mode will have your character leading a team of AI-controlled compatriots, which will include battle Nuns (Battle nuns! - Ed), Templars, half-angels and of course that mainstay of the Gospel, heavy-weapons cyborgs.

This game is an attempt by Konami at PC-orientated programming using the Quake 3 engine, and this is one developer with a solid track record. Unfortunately (or maybe not, who knows) Konami UK, rather than the Japanese studio, is working on Apocalyptica so don't expect it to be Metal Gear Solid.



## ALPHA BLACK ZERO

It's like today, but in space

Developer: Khaeon ■ Publisher: Playlogic ■ Distributor: TBA ■ Due: Q3

In the future one superpower has dominance: SolGov. They have become mighty through economic and military control of the stars. These economics have left many Third World planets not protected by the rich, but rather policed by them. This has left some very unhappy campers.

In this atmosphere, unassailable fleets of ships are less effective than highly-trained specialist operatives at combating the threat of terrorism and secret plots. That's where teams like Alpha Black Zero come in.

The game starts with the leader of the Alpha Black Zero team in military court charged with mass murder. The mission flashbacks that make up Lieutenant Kyle Hardlaw's case are the elements of the game where the player take control and write the story as they go along.

What unfolds in the team-based tactical FPS is a tale of abandonment in the field and corruption which will shake the foundations of SolGov.



## PIRATES OF THE BURNING SEA

You can get better results with Anusol

Developer: Flying Lab ■ Publisher: Flying Lab ■ Distributor: Flying Lab ■ Due: Q3

Avast, me hearties! Take to the seas and plunder the rich Dutch East Indies or set sail for Queen and Country.

Pirates of the Burning Sea is a massively multiplayer game which kicks off in swashbuckling 1720 in the warm waters of the Caribbean Sea. This a time when the Spain is losing its grip on the ocean, new nautical gizmos are cropping up and ritualistic mojo is starting to do more than just keep superstitious natives in check (well, in the game at least).

Players take on the role of Ship's Captain and you'll have the Burning Seas, the major islands of the area and, of course, shipping traffic to explore and exploit.

It will be possible to upgrade, decorate, arm and, eventually custom-design vessels in the player's quest to rule the waves and crush other ships flying enemy colours.

Burning Seas will be graphically intense and Flying Labs insists the game will only be playable on a broadband connection.



## CURSE: THE EYE OF ISIS

My daddy is a mummy

Developer: Asylum ■ Publisher: Wanadoo ■ Distributor: Take 2 ■ Due: Q3

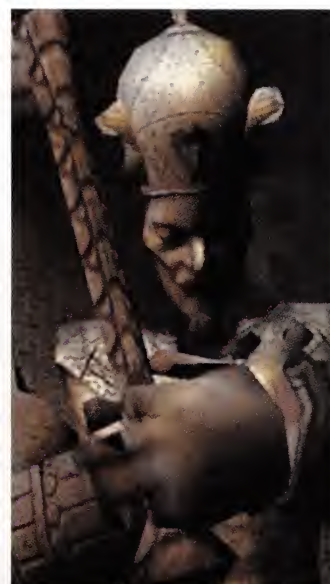
Ancient Egyptian curses and English accents meet in their most classic form: a horror adventure story.

Gameplay mixes the usual combat, exploration and puzzle solving and players alternate control of two characters. One is an American Engineer, Darien, whose father was a famous Egyptologist who was victim to the eponymous curse and the other is Victoria, a young Egyptologist with psychic flashes.

On a trail of visions and the notes belonging to Darien's father the pair plunge into the heart of the horror and mystery behind the Eye of Isis.

They will run afoul of evil spirits and objects animated by the curse, mercenary soldiers, and even a rival collector or two.

The game is steeped in Victorian design, architecture, fashion, smelling salts, weapons, and billowy shirts. Beyond this, Asylum promises cinematic camera angles to tell its atmospheric tale starting at the Museum of Natural History in London and wrapping up in the depths of the ancient Pyramid.

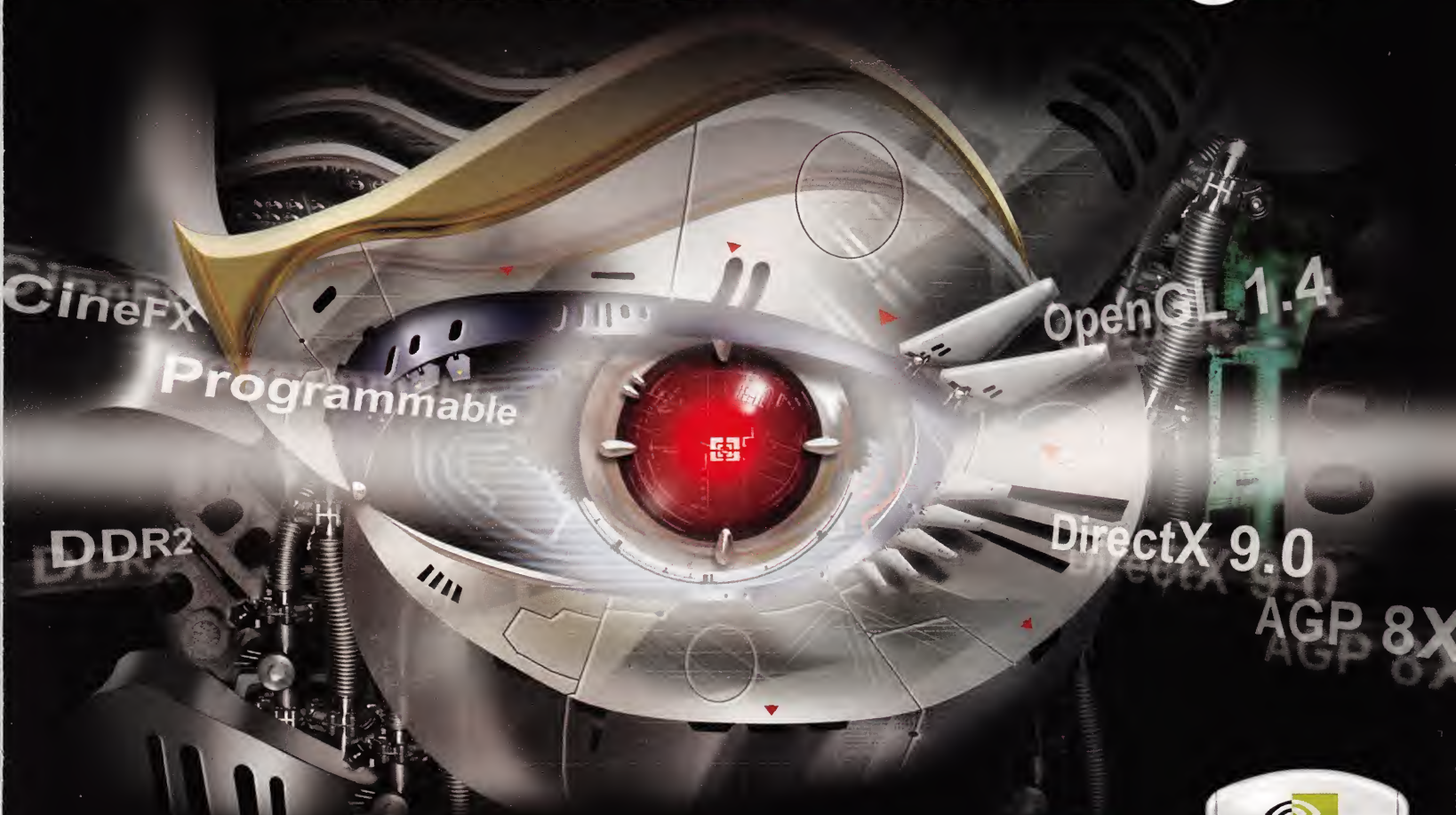






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<http://www.asus.com>





## WARLORDS IV

It's all Australian, and all fantasy strategy!

Developer: SSG ■ Publisher: Ubi Soft ■  
Distributor: Ubi Soft ■ Due: May

Warlords IV is the next in the series of turn-based fantasy strategy games with all the elves, dwarves, undead and orcs you've come to expect and love as well as a few surprises like the evil Volturan. Each race has its own spells, tech-trees and heroes and the game puts an impressive 140 unit types at your disposal.

A new addition to the series is tactical combat, with players being whizzed to a new "board" to determine the fate of their troops as they seize control of Etheria.

The turn-based conquest is spread across a non-linear campaign that will let players forge their way across the map as they choose and take on the objectives they want.

Heroes will also be carried between missions, to keep up the continuity, and you'll also have to beat off invasions, fight duels and keep a turn ahead of the arms race by saving enough cash for artefacts of doom.

## RESTRICTED AREA

Diablo 2 but with even more Linux geeks

Developer: Master Creating ■ Publisher:  
TBA ■ Distributor: TBA ■ Due: Late 2003

If you can imagine Diablo II on speed and set in the future then you have a vague idea what Restricted Area is all about. Its developers claim that since they have written the game not in C++ but in Assembler, it features the most compact and fastest isometric game engine ever created.

Restricted Area will pack a vast array of weapons and cyberware - replacing the magical items and gems - and also boasts a choice of four characters promising different gameplay options. There's the gun-toting agent, beautiful psychic sorceress, Asian martial artist and the computer hacker with a drone guard. Each has different background story, approach to missions, abilities and sets of 30 or so skills.

The developers claim the game will feature a non-linear story and a random sub-quest generator, so every game should pack something new.

Finally, co-operative multiplayer options mean that you don't have to sneak into the Restricted Area alone.



### Skull Throwing

Hits per unit: 85  
Group Hits: 255  
Missile Range: 8



## IMPERIUM GALACTICA 3: GENESIS

Massive in scope, pretty as a picture

Developer: Mithis ■ Publisher: CDV ■  
Distributor: Red Ant ■ Due: Q3

Imperium Galactica 3 sports an all-new 3D engine, a new developer and totally spaced out back story. Players escape being engulfed by a black hole in a Hyperspace Glider with an AI named Angel. After ducking and weaving between dimensions for a decade or so they finally arrive back at Earth to find it has been invaded.

Developer Mithis plans to combine ongoing colonisation, research, empire management and fleet building with a stream of 15 story missions and 25 optional sub-quests. The main missions have to be completed to advance in the game, but the player can dive in when they, and their fleet, are both ready.

The RTS combat will take place in realtime with the option to leap into a cockpit FPS-style. Besides the invaders of Earth, there will also be five other alien races to war or ally with and each option offers new missions. Do you have what it takes to free the Earth?



## NO MAN'S LAND

You got to fight for your right

Developer: Related Designs ■ Publisher:  
CDV ■ Distributor: Red Ant ■ Due: Q3

This game spans the 300 year history of the colonisation and development of America. And it's in realtime.

No Man's Land will offer 6 playable nations: the English, Spanish, Patriots, Settlers as well as Woodland and Prairie Natives. Each nation will have its own special units and curious special 'spells' like the plague and even chastity belts.

Two of the three singleplayer campaigns with ten missions apiece cover Spanish military misadventures, the native fight against the plundering palefaces, while the third follows a family of English settlers through the War of Independence and then into the Wild West.

No Man's Land will also offer bounty hunters who can be hired to hunt enemy elite units, a random map generator, morale and experience individually calculated for each unit and six multiplayer modes including a railroad building contest.





The background of the poster features a fiery, orange and red landscape. In the center, a woman with long, flowing red hair and a man with a shaved head and a determined expression are shown. They are framed by two large, jagged, metallic blades that rise from the bottom. Above them, a large, dark, monstrous face with glowing orange eyes looms in the dark sky. The title 'Unreal II' is written in a large, stylized, gothic font, with 'THE AWAKENING' in a smaller, bold, sans-serif font below it.

# Unreal® II

## THE AWAKENING

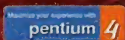


**1998: Unreal® forever changes the face of the first person shooter.**

**2003: Unreal® II - The Awakening...does it again.**

"The graphics literally made me speechless...practically rival movies."  
GameSpy.com

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# TECH CHASER

With Asher Moses

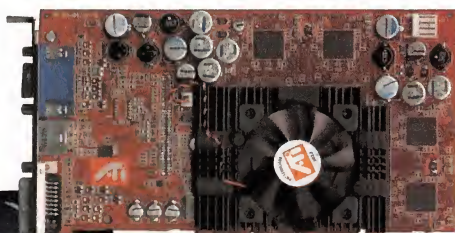
## SAPPHIRE RADEON 9700

Price: \$539 ■ Distributor: AusPCMarket ■ URL: auspcmarket.com.au ■ Phone: 02 9817 2899

If you're looking for mind-blowing performance but can't afford the high price tag on the Radeon 9700 Pro cards, you may find that the vanilla-flavoured 9700 is right up your alley. In order for ATI to sell the regular 9700 at such low prices, a couple of changes had to be made to the R9700 Pro, which in turn slightly cripples its performance.

For starters, the regular 9700 features a core/memory clock speed of 277/540MHz, which is somewhat slower than the R9700 Pro's 325/620MHz. The avid tech-gurus amongst us will immediately be thinking "That's the same clock speed featured on the 9500, so why isn't performance identical?". Well no, because unlike the 9500 with its meagre 128bit memory bus, the 9700 features a full 256bit bus, just like its older brother the R9700 Pro - allowing for double the memory bandwidth and thus, greater performance.

As far as performance comparisons are concerned, benchmarks from around the web have shown the R9700 to be performing slightly above the GeForce4 Ti4600 mark - Very impressive considering the card's low selling price. Add in the fact that you can quite easily overclock the 9700 to full R9700 Pro speeds and this chipset could very well be the next GeForce4 Ti4200.



## PCCASEGEAR BADGES

Price: \$5.95 each ■ Distributor: PCCaseGear ■ URL: pccasegear.com.au ■ Phone: 03 9568 0932

Are you an AMD or Intel fanboy? Why not show your loyalty to the world by adorning your case with a badge advertising your preferred manufacturer? Or how about an "Overclocked Powerhouse" or "Counter-Strike Addict" badge to make your case look just that bit cooler? Whatever the design you're after, PCCaseGear is sure to at least have something similar in stock, and at a price of just \$5.95, they won't break the bank either. If your an enthusiast who likes to have it all, badging your case will bring you one step closer to ultimate geekdom.



## FLEXIGLOW CABLE KITS

Price: \$49 ■ Distributor: Flexi-Glow ■ URL: flexiglow.com.au ■ Phone: 02 9684 6796

What's the most convenient and cheapest way of sprucing up your PC, short of breaking out the paintbrush and power tools? Wrapping it in neon cabling of course! Coming in various colours including red, blue and yellow, the Flexiglow cable PC kit plugs directly into a 4-pin MOLEX connector on your PSU and at 2.3mm thick, can wrap around just about anything! Be creative, and be sure to send us some pictures of what you come up with!



## WINDOW APPLIQUES

Price: \$8.80 each ■ Distributor: PCCaseGear ■ URL: pccasegear.com.au ■ Phone: 03 9568 0932

Your window kit may have made you the envy of all your friends a few years ago, but nowadays with many PCs coming window-equipped off the shelf, a sheet of plastic/glass in the side of your case is unfortunately not as drool-inducing or unique as it used to be. The solution? Why not liven things up a bit with an applique? These come in various designs, ranging from the Quake symbols, to skulls and weapons, even Tux the penguin!

## LIAN-LI FRONT MULTIMEDIA BAY

Price: \$95 ■ Distributor: AusPCMarket ■ URL: auspcmarket.com.au ■ Phone: 02 9817 2899



If you value the convenience of having most of your PC ports at the front of your case, but own a Lian-Li enclosure and can't stand the look of beige front ports, you should check out the Lian-Li multimedia bay. Slotting into a spare 5 1/4" drive bay and supporting audio, USB, game, PS/2 and firewire ports, by purchasing this unit you may never have to venture into the mess of cables at the back of your case again! Priced at a whopping \$95 they are quite expensive, but the added convenience may justify the high price of the unit.



## 80MM EVERCOOL FAN

Price: \$19.95 ■ Distributor: PCCaseGear ■ URL: pccasegear.com.au ■ Phone: 03 9568 0932

Are you looking for a case fan to serve as a complement to your sexy new aluminium case? If so, the Evercool range of aluminium fans may be just what the doctor ordered. Featuring a sturdy aluminium casing, chrome painted blades and a double ball-bearing for reliability and longevity, these fans are not only of high quality, but as you can see from the image, aesthetically pleasing as well. At a price of \$19.95 they are quite expensive and probably out of reach for the average user, however, well worth it for the case modder or overclocker who won't settle for second best.



## ANTEC LANBOY

Price: \$180 ■ Distributor: SecretNet ■ URL: secret.com.au ■ Phone: N/A (Online only)

If you're a frequent LAN party goer, chances are you've experienced the inconvenience that is lugging your heavy steel case all the way to the venue, and finally back home again after gaming the night away with little to no sleep. Well, so has Antec, and that's why they've just released a new PC enclosure, dubbed LanBoy. Made from lightweight aluminium, and featuring a high quality Antec SmartBlue 350watt power supply and a windowed side panel with blue LED illumination, this case is sure to make you the envy of all your friends at the next event. The best part of it all is that you don't even need to lay a finger on a single power tool. Stand by for our full review very soon!



## ABIT SERILLEL ADAPTOR

Price: \$72.50 ■ Distributor: SecretNet ■ URL: secret.com.au ■ Phone: N/A

If you're currently looking at purchasing a new motherboard, but can't afford to upgrade your hard drive to the new SerialATA standard, Abit's Serillel adaptor is the ideal solution. To install the device, all you need to do is plug the adaptor into a spare SerialATA port, then hook up your parallel ATA hard drive to the adaptor itself. Although these come stock with most Abit motherboards, Serillel adaptors are also sold separately at around the \$70 mark. Very expensive for such a simple device, but also very handy if you're not ready to go down the SerialATA road just yet.



## LITEPAD ELITE

Price: \$39 ■ Distributor: Flexi-Glow ■ URL: flexiglow.com.au ■ Phone: 02 9684 6796

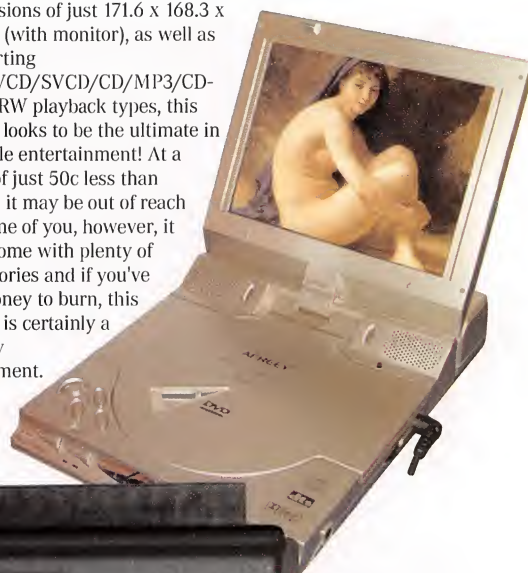
Until recently, when purchasing a new mouse pad you've had the choice of either something that is aesthetically pleasing, or something that is high performing - never both. Set to break this trend, the Litepad Elite is looking to be the next big thing in mousing surfaces. In the past, clear pads and optical mice didn't mix very well at all, as the little camera at the bottom of the mouse couldn't accurately detect changes in a clear pad's surface. However, this issue has thankfully been rectified with the Litepad and the glow of the mouse's LED over the clear surface is a very nice touch indeed. Furthermore, these pads perform superbly as well - all for a low price of \$39.



## AFREY PORTABLE DVD PLAYER

Price: \$1,599.50 ■ Distributor: Techbuy ■ URL: techbuy.com.au ■ Phone: 02 9648 1818

Ever been on a long bus ride and just wished that you were doing something a little more interesting with your time? What about those never ending plane trips to Thailand with mum and dad? If this sounds like you, allow us to introduce Afrey's PDV2000 Portable DVD player - featuring dimensions of just 171.6 x 168.3 x 34mm (with monitor), as well as supporting DVD/VCD/SVCD/CD/MP3/CD-R/CD-RW playback types, this device looks to be the ultimate in portable entertainment! At a price of just 50c less than \$1600, it may be out of reach for some of you, however, it does come with plenty of accessories and if you've got money to burn, this device is certainly a worthy investment.





# AUSTRALIA'S MOST WANTED

## The games you want to play now, but still have to wait for

Australia's Most Wanted is collated monthly from votes sent to:

[amw@pcpowerplay.com.au](mailto:amw@pcpowerplay.com.au). Be a part of it, send your 10 most wanted games today!

- |    |                          |
|----|--------------------------|
| 1  | <b>Doom 3</b>            |
| 2  | <b>SW Galaxies</b>       |
| 3  | <b>Deus Ex 2</b>         |
| 4  | <b>CS Condition Zero</b> |
| 5  | <b>Star Wars KOTOR</b>   |
| 6  | <b>Planetside</b>        |
| 7  | <b>World of Warcraft</b> |
| 8  | <b>Enter the Matrix</b>  |
| 9  | <b>Rome: Total War</b>   |
| 10 | <b>Republic</b>          |

**A** little bit of a shift on the AMW list this month with the arrival of AMW veterans Freelancer, Splinter Cell and Unreal 2 in our review pigeonholes. While the votes still came in thick and strong for these games, we've decided to bump them as they are all available now. This has brought in a couple of new titles, most notably Enter the Matrix, which hadn't received much attention until news of its impending release hit the Internet. So much for our cover story last year! Rome: Total War has also made a showing, no doubt due to both the very tasty pics we published in PCPP#83 and the interview conducted by Steve Polak in PCPP#84, fleshing out the vision for this 3D strategy game that promises 5000 men in the field. Planetside has unexpectedly reared its head once more, goodness knows why, and World of Warcraft pops in for the first time, due to some idle chatter online. The second anticipated Star Wars game, Knights of the Old Republic, jumps out of the woodwork into position 5, which is good because its the Star Wars game that actually definitely looks like getting released here. As for Galaxies... well, everyone wants it. Will they bring it out? And Doom 3. Always with Doom 3. As if any of you will even have machines capable of running it. Oh well, you can but dream right? Don't forget to vote!



**2: STAR WARS GALAXIES**

Basically, if we've learnt one thing from the experience of this Age of Mythology competition, it's that everyone in the entire universe seems to want a free copy of this 3D RTS opus from Age of Empires developers Ensemble. And why not, when the Collector's Edition was on offer, jam packed with more stuff that you could shake a trident at. The fans went wild for the chance to get their mitts on a soundtrack CD, a Making of DVD, a bunch of posters of all the Gods, an enormous movie-style poster for their bedroom walls, a Minotaur figurine, Bullfinch's Mythology (an actual book!) and big flashy technology tree charts. We had literally hundreds of entries, and while we were originally going to select a winner on quality, the vision of Gaming's God was so uniformly good - yet wildly different from each imagination - we eventually had to choose our four standard AOM pack winners randomly. But the grand prize, the Collector's Edition, that went to Brody Mulry of Killara, NSW with his

intricately detailed vision of the God of Gaming - known as HydroFusion. Apart from having a genetic makeup consisting of equal parts eel, human, superhuman, and goat, HydroFusion is also powered by GeForceFX, has extreme heatsink ability, and a magical Orb that holds the entire Internet in its scope. We'd print Brody's picture of HydroFusion, but unfortunately it was so intense it caused our scanner to explode and Paul Noone got a big piece of glass jammed right in his eye. See, a God so powerful that even its mere image freed us from the cruel stare of the PCPP disc producer!

Our runners up - and by runners up we mean lucky buggers who still get their hands on one of the best RTSs of 2002 for free - include Mitchell Adkins of Cairns, QLD and his God Armengar who worshipped Pong. There's also Daniel Morrison, Kyneton VIC with his intermediate God Haxor, whose favoured weapon is the Aimbot-enhanced AK-47. Then came David Ward of Hamilton QLD who conjured Hamill, the God of, oddly enough, the positive aspects of gaming. And finally, there was the stark simplicity of Drazen Kovac of Craighburn VIC, who simply sent us an elegant line drawing labelled "Fusion Mummy God of the Dead." We like it. Now you all go play AOM, you here? Until dawn!



# ANGUS DEI WINNERS!



# RAVEN SHIELD & TACTICAL BOARD

## 5 OF EACH TO BE WON!

It's the ultimate in first-person strategic type gaming! Coupled with the elegant and sophisticated keyboard-replacement Tactical Board from peripheral gurus Thrustmaster, Raven Shield transcends its similarity to previous Clancy titles and instead becomes THE ULTIMATE! That's right, you heard right, THE ULTIMATE, by which of course we mean THE ULTIMATE CLANCY-THEMED SHOOTER USED WITH A THRUSTMASTER TACTICAL BOARD.

Seriously though, for folks new to the Clancy series, Raven Shield is a hell of a place to start. It's a serious and in-depth squad-based shooter, sending the player decked out in all sorts of clever technology, deep into warehouses full of terrorists and hostages in miniskirts. Phwoar. Anyway, dozens of enhancements make Raven Shield certainly one of the most high-tech games currently on the shelves, with everything from dynamic intelligent crosshairs to heartbeat sensors, very handy for seeing through walls. You should probably play this game, if you think of yourself as a serious gamer. But soft! You don't have the best part of \$100? Purchase of your yearly PCPP subscription finally spill you over the abyss into bankruptcy? Fear not! For we have 5 copies of Raven Shield to give away.

And in order to further sweeten an already very sweet deal (and seriously risk a sweetness overload and turn the entire world into some kind of giant French or French-Canadian version of Rainbow Brite's magical adventure kingdom) Thrustmaster, never far from Ubi Soft's side, has thrown in 5 Tactical Board keyboard replacements. They only have the essential buttons, instead of the full gamut including that one that says SysRq that no one knows what it does. Same with Scroll Lock. Why do we still have those keys? Anyway, the Tactical Board is good, and double-good when paired with Raven Shield.

All you need to do in order to win this fabulous pack of gaming goodness is rate the current terrorism threat to gaming. That's right, a simple scale (of your own devising) showing how much at risk we as gamers are at, because of who we are, from terrorists. And for added spice, you must include the name of the terrorist organisation that is most dangerous to gamers. It doesn't have to be a real terrorist organisation. It can be fully made up. Anyway, pile all this together in tiny neat letters on the back of the requisite envelope and send it to:

**Last Tango in Dongdingalong  
C/- PC PowerPlay  
78 Renwick St  
Redfern NSW 2016**



**AND MAY THE LEAST POLITICALLY FRAUGHT ENTRY WIN!**

# COMING SOON

## MARCH

## 2003

1503 AD New World (EA)	01/04/03
Blitzkrieg (Red Ant)	08/04/03
Blood Rayne (Vivendi)	25/04/03
Etherlords 2 (Strategy First)	08/04/03
Freedom: Battle Liberty ISL (EA)	21/04/03
Humvee Assault (Infogrames)	19/04/03
Jurassic Park: Project Genesis(Vivendi)	14/04/03
Lionheart(Interplay)	07/04/03
Midnight Club 2 (Take 2)	09/04/03
Neverwinter Nights Expansion(Infogrames)	11/04/03
Rise of Nations (Microsoft)	22/04/03
Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness(Infogrames)	15/04/03
Tropico 2: Pirates Cove (Take 2)	18/04/03
X2: Wolverine's Revenge (Activision)	15/04/03

## APRIL

## 2003

Celebrity Deathmatch (Take2)	08/05/03
Crusader Kings (Strategy First)	06/05/03
Enter the Matrix (Infogrames)	15/05/03
Escape from Alcatraz (Red Ant)	08/05/03
CS Condition Zero (Vivendi)	01/05/03
Harpoon 4 (Ubi Soft)	20/5/03
The Hulk (Vivendi)	26/06/03
Lionheart (Vivendi)	01/05/03
Medieval: Viking Invasion (Activision)	20/05/03
Starsky and Hutch (Vivendi)	01/05/03
Elite Force 2 (Activision)	20/05/03
WarCraft 3: The Frozen Throne (Vivendi)	05/05/03
Warlords 4 (Ubi Soft)	01/05/03
Zone of Enders (Infogrames)	15/05/03

## MAY

## 2003

Lock On (Ubi Soft)	05/06/03
Halo Combat Evolved (Microsoft)	14/06/03
Will Rock (Ubi Soft)	14/06/03



# YES WE NEED ANOTHER HERO

Timothy C Best



**I**magine the Australian James Bond, our epitome of Aussie style, capability and expertise. Okay, now try it without thinking of Big Kev or Steve Irwin in a kaki double-breasted suit. It's not easy. If you were to picture the French, German, Russian, Latin American or even Czech version of Bond you're likely to get very distinct images based on each country's trademark style. But Aussie ain't so easy.

The Japanese have made an art of marketing their distinct culture to western audiences. Look at all the Manga floating around. You can tell pretty much straight off when you have Japanese animation, to the extent that all other animation seems a pale imitation. For instance, while the Warner Bros Batman animated series is awesome, it's not like the show where a bump on a guy's head grows and grows until a robot sprouts out of his ear and he has to battle it in the final fight. Now, that's Japanese.

## Antipodean antiheroes

It's obvious that you can give a story real impact just through a unique dash of world view and cultural identity. Americans do it with brashness, the French with style and the Japanese with sheer kook-factor. We, on the other hand, either craft tales with the goal of being indistinguishable from the Americans - because that's what the gaming world expects - or we take every cork hat, native animal, and outback cliché we can find and inflate them to fill the screen.

If we have a serious identity it's reserved for the smaller tales we tell ourselves. I'm talking about the likes of Lantana, Two Hands, Bliss, The Tracker, Romper Stomper, Breaker Morant, Heartbreak High and Gallipoli (Heartbreak High? - Ed).

I think it was Yahoo Serious in Young Einstein was the last time an Australian character saved the world, and that was only by accident. It's almost like we're shy or something.

The closest thing we have to Australia heroic ideals in Aussie shows are the great survivor heroes like Molly Craig in Rabbit Proof Fence or the stoic prisoners in Changi.

The original Star Trek had a major character drawn from every populated continent, except ours, when trying to show a unified world of the future. Obviously, they don't need shark handlers, life guards, insane croco-philos or cantankerous media moguls in outer space.

The X-Men, like Star Trek, had a global feel as one of their central conceits, with members from every continent except Australia - which really sucks since the X-Men spent dozens of issues hiding in the Outback while they were pretending to be dead. In fact, the only vaguely active Australian Marvel Comics characters are the Kangaroo and Boomerang, both of whom are as lame as they sound.

I mean, give me a break! Storm is from Africa

but she's not known as Lion-Girl or Swahili-Lass. Nightcrawler is German but he's not a humourless efficiency Nazi - quite the opposite, he's one of the wise crackers of the group who's now a priest. The most popular X-Man is actually Canadian but Wolverine is as far from the polite Canadian image as possible.

So where are the cool characters that just happen to represent Australia? Is it really that hard to come up with them?

## Just a (bad) taste

We have an impressive film industry, and our games development history stretches back to the 80s. Beyond that, our SAS go through training that would make Navy SEALs blanch, our communications technology is world-class, our biogenetics research is impressive and we have a proud tradition of adventurers and physical-types. Surely that gives us some scope.

Furthermore, Charles Kingsford Smith didn't fly his plane in khakis or alligator skins. The Don didn't go out in thongs between matches and Cathy Freeman, an Aussie wonder-woman with a penchant for provocative flags, doesn't have them plastered all over her costume. We don't have to go overboard with Australian flavour.

One game that got the ingredients right, and incidentally the only example I can put my finger on was Ratbag's Powerslide. Not only did the game feature a state of the art game engine, it also stood out from the crowd in look and feel. You could almost taste the red dust. Ask the developers and they'll tell you their focus was on making the best racing game they could - it just happened to keep reminding people of Mad Max. Sure, many of the tracks had a distinctive iron-red tint to them but it was more than that, the game tapped into an Australian feel. It was effortless - in fact, I'm sure Aussie developers have to go much greater lengths to de-Australianise games enough to be accepted by US audiences.

This is weird to me, because no one in the world would be better at making rule-bucking, antiheroes with a twist of humour better than Aussies. Megastar and sometime Aussie resident Mel Gibson taps this Aussie larrikin charm and he comes off very differently to other US actors such as Tom Hanks or George Clooney.

Emulating US games is fair enough to get some attention but we're not likely to do US better than the US - especially when you consider how much we like to take the piss out of them.



## Larrikin Charm

We might be self-deprecating but we'll stack up Ned Kelly against any antihero in the world. We'd take pragmatism, humour, resourcefulness and self-reliance over blind jingoism, pompous flashy style and gaudy self-importance any day.

To go back to my initial challenge, creating the Australian James Bond, it's really easy if you can manage to stash the cultural cringe for two shakes of a lamb's tail. If you look at the qualities that we respect the most and would go into our archetypal hero you'd see they are pretty unique and pretty easy to put together.

You'd start with Crocodile Dundee for the self-depreciation, dry wit, resourcefulness and understated expertise. Then you'd add a Ned "Such it Life" Kelly style streak of fatalism and round it out with the eccentric technical expertise of Bruce Spence's Gyrocopter pilot from Mad Max. Finally, you'd have the SAS background. Our Bond would be less cocky than the English or US versions, and would constantly be downplaying his role in saving the world, not because saving the world is easy but because he doesn't want to sound like a wanker. He'd be kind of like Russell Crowe before the boy from Coffs Harbour had his brain eaten away by the acid society of Hollywood.

Our bond would tell xXx that he loves those little mints too and you'd only ever hear him say "G'day", "sport", "cobber" and "dinkum" if he was trying to pick up US sorority girls. He'd kick arse, be all ours, and be unique.

Look, I'm as jaded as the next overpaid, underworked games journo and the only time you'll even see me so much as consider standing up for Advance Australia Fair is in the presence of an eighty-three year old Digger, whom I'm related to, on Anzac Day, if the ground is wet. All I'm saying is that we should make use of the only thing that truly makes our developers unique - our Australian identity. And by identity, I don't mean riding around on a mountain bike with a giant inflatable kangaroo strapped, BDSM-style, to our backs. We're never going to live that one down.



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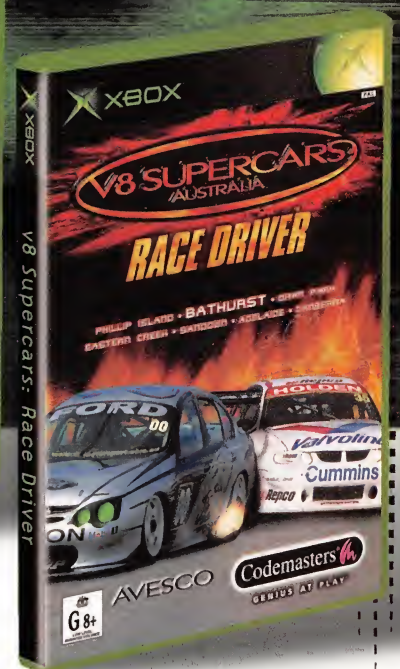
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# SEQUELS OF DESIRE

## The Guerrilla Gamer



**I**t's mega preview time again and this year's upcoming releases are being hung out for inspection by the ever widening waistline that is the games industry. But what do we see when we look out over the vista of 2003? A lineup of genre busting, ground breaking mega titles? A fresh breeze heady with the scent of new ideas? A firestorm of innovation? Or just another bunch of sequels? I mean, check it out: Doom3, Deus Ex 2, Black & White 2, Star Trek: Elite Force 2, Unreal 2, Tropico 2 etc, etc.

No one is denying the desire of many people to revisit their favourite game worlds in newer, more challenging forms but are we going too far? Our own Channel Nine recently conducted a revealing forum with new anti-drought lobby Young Liberals Against Urination, allowing these new Australian heroes to vent their true feelings on the current state of the games industry. Many were completely bemused and thought they were there to do an ad for Planet Ark's evil conservative opposite number, Planet Cash Machine, however some of them had been off their medication long enough to make a few lucid comments questioning the wisdom of current industry practices.

**We could have Thief III: The One Tel Disaster where you're a disgruntled One Tel shareholder out for revenge against Jodee Rich and his odorous cohorts**

### Imagine this!

The general thrust of the comments concerned the lack of imagination when developing follow up titles and the opportunities that are being lost to really make a difference in the gaming community. Indeed game sequels have the power to reach out beyond the bedroom/home office, touching the lives of everyone around them. Not just as hollow cash cows for yuppie game publishers aching with jealousy over their rival's fourteen speed hot tub, but as revealing windows into the soul of mankind. Instead of just more of the same with some new levels why not blow the lid on all our social ills instead? Here are some ideas to chew on:

Instead of just Thief III we could have Thief III: The One Tel disaster where the player acts as a disgruntled One Tel shareholder out for revenge against Jodee Rich and his odorous cohorts. This third person action/stealth game would feature cutting edge 3D graphics capable of displaying One Tel's extravagant taste in fine furnishings and wall decorations in intimate detail. Zoom right in and read Picasso's signature on the paintings hanging in the janitor's supply room. Or just walk around and marvel at the fully bump mapped textures on

the 200 meter high waterfall cascading down the inside of One Tel HQ. A waterfall that finishes up in a small lake on the ground floor complete with a motion captured family of endangered hump back whales and an entire Inuit village transported igloo by igloo from Alaska during the boom period of the late 90's.

### Comedy? I'll give ye comedy!

Then there's Neverwinter Nights 2: Axis of Evil, an all new adventure into the heart of darkness. Just when the people of Neverwinter were returning to their mostly normal lives a new threat emerges from the east. The mighty Kim Jong Il, a demon God from ancient legend, threatens to lead his very neatly dressed army on a rampage in search of rare luxuries such as food and laundry detergent. Can your party unearth the legendary magic Porkchop and use it to lure Jong Il's horde to their doom in time? For not only do you have one Demon to deal with but three. Your skills will be pushed to the limit when Saddam unleashes his weapons of mass destruction upon the walls of fair Neverwinter. However the all new character class of Weapons Inspector will be available to counter anything Saddam can throw at you. Send him in to Saddam's camp and watch the demon's henchmen scurry to hide all the incriminating evidence, rendering the weapons useless. Completing the Axis of Evil are the mighty Mullahs of Iran, powerful wizards capable of reaching into the lives of the ordinary citizens of Neverwinter, forcing them to perform unnatural acts upon their livestock. Female warriors will be of particular value against the mad mullahs who are helpless against their charms. Female warriors with armoured bikinis will receive extra bonuses.

### Taste and me don't get on

And wouldn't we all be better off with something like Falcon 5: Friendly Fire on our wish list? In Falcon 5: Friendly fire you play out the career of Frank Steele, US airforce pilot and top gun. Frank isn't known throughout the service as Friendly Fire Frank for nothing. While your friends and copilots are out there making the world a safer place your job is to hunt down isolated recon teams, forward observers and special forces advisors and punish them for being so foolish as to not expect an attack from an aircraft that looks just like one of their own. These small and insignificant teams are usually from allied countries too gay to give the US their full support and so deserve to be punished for their lack of commitment. Players will automatically receive a genuine, signed presidential citation when the game has recorded a minimum of 500 confirmed Canadian kills.

### Can even I go too far?

Finally how could the year's line up of new titles



be complete without Ghost Recon 2: Movie Madness. Developers Red Storm have taken one of the most thrilling and successful hostage rescue operations of recent times, the Moscow Theatre Siege, and created a stunning first person action game that captures all the excitement and drama of that fateful day. Chechen gunmen have taken 700 hostages inside a Moscow theatre and are demanding cheaper access to broadband internet, a 60 meter high statue of William Shatner placed in the central square in Groszny and the immediate, televised cremation of Greg Norman. A wide selection of nerve gasses and other chemical agents will be at your disposal to successfully complete the operation. Advanced AI will allow the Chechen gunmen to evade these attacks on higher levels of difficulty; however points will still be awarded for disabling hostages so there's no need to be picky. Adding unexpected depth to the game are the friends and relatives of the hostages who mill around outside the theatre and must occasionally be tranquilised and even 'accidentally' backed over by a lorry to keep them quiet.

What a top year it would be if we had these to look forward to, alas we'll just have to make do with what the industry doles out to us, ho hum.

*The Guerrilla Gamer is a veteran PC games journalist whose grating soapbox-like rants are really starting to stretch our patience. It's clear that a lifetime of squatting in front of a cathode ray tube mechanically repeating the same simple movements over and over has given him a palsied and distorted concept of "comedy". You should have seen this article before we edited it! Sheesh!*



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# A CELEBRATION OF CELERON

Stuart Calvin



**I** will soon be rich. The Editor has promised me a dollar for every "what do I upgrade first?" letter I receive in my monthly round of Setup. If I knew something about statistics I could elegantly state why there isn't a nice bell-curve distribution of CPU speeds among readers of Setup (page 104, good stuff by yours truly!). In terms of you fools who still run Celerons, there's not just a couple of outliers that skew the data, there's a Celeron community the size of a small African nation oblivious to current and emerging technology.

I just can't believe the number of readers out there running processors slower than my digital watch. But hey, what the hell. I'll dedicate this column to all the Celeron users out there, and let the rest of you know exactly what an arcane, overcomplicated, nasty mess the world of Celeron really is.

Remember AMD's Duron? It was their equivalent of a Celeron, a cut-down version of the Athlon core, with less cache memory which made it theoretically much cheaper to build and thus sell. However, the emergence of the Athlon Thunderbird and the associated drop in Athlon prices made the Duron kind of a waste of effort, as a 1.2GHz Duron was only about \$25 cheaper than a similarly clocked Athlon.

Celeron on the other hand just keeps going and going, with more revisions, more die-sizes and more pin configurations than, it seems, any other CPU available to home users. So let's take a look.

## First up

Let me set the mood here by saying that gaming on a late model Celeron is not bad at all. We know that Celerons are just nipple-crippled Pentiums. The silicon wafer that makes a P4 also makes a Celeron. So, with the advent of the 3GHz P4, would you actually buy a Celeron these days? You betcha because we're looking at a 400MHz Front Side Bus with a pin layout the same as a Pentium 4. Which means instant P4 upgrade once the bank account has recharged; lift the locking arms, pick out the Celery and replace with chunky P4. Then switch on machine. Couldn't be easier. A Celeron is a good stop-gap measure, and it can save you up to \$600 on the cost of a new PC.

I keep a couple of older PCs around the place so I can see how new games run with varying degrees of grunt. I have a few Celerons among the Pentiums, but the smallest baby of all is a 533MHz rig running 512MB of PC100 RAM in Win98SE viewed through an ageing TNT2 M64 all plugged into a basic Soyo motherboard. Let me be clear: this box is no fun, especially in regard to 3D games. It is even no fun with an GeForce4 MX400 instead of the TNT2 and in the badly-coded DOS shell that is called Windows 98, I would have to upgrade the CPU to even get Neverwinter Nights to load.



## Back to the future

Want to replace your old Celeron with a cheap (\$250) 2GHz model? Well, I'm going to scare you, dear budgeteer, into a short, sharp motherboard upgrade by confounding you with brutal facts. Just when you thought it safe to open your case and shop around, I did some serious reading. I'm not going near VRM Specification Design Requirements (which is how you fry a new, faster chip on an older motherboard). I don't want to touch on stuff like cC0 and cB0 stepping or internal split planes for Vcc. Truly, these are problems for older boards and older chips and no-one deserves the bum-numbing explanations about them. But I will say this: since the operating voltage of Celerons changes dramatically according to what speed CPU you go for, programmable Voltage ID regulators are required so you don't zap your new chip instantly or fry it over time. I'm not going near memory compatibility or chipset support except to say that an upgrade from an old-fashioned low-end Celeron rig to a new-fangled Celeron rig is going to involve a new motherboard and new memory, preferably DDR or PC133/150 RAM if you move from a 66MHz FSB to 100MHz.

Obviously your motherboard chipset will limit or guide your upgrade in most instances. A lot of early-model Celeron owners will still have the Intel 440BX AGP Set (damn it was sweet and stable in its time) which supports both 66MHz and 100MHz FSB speeds, ECC RAM and some legacy stuff such as ISA (the slot format for old soundcards and modems). Later Celerons require at least the Intel 810 or 815 chipsets. Modern Celerons and P4s share the same motherboard technology and this is why you might consider buying one should your budget not stretch to \$800 just for your CPU.

## Put aside your shame

As I said earlier, there's now nothing terribly wrong with a fast Celeron and my family plays quite happily at 1.4GHz on a Shuttle B-stepper with an GeForce4 MX440. I reckon it's as good as a P3-933 on an Intel 815EP motherboard.

However, if you already have Celeron and want to upgrade with the minimum of cost, your upgrade path is muddled by the proliferation of Celeron variants with different requirements. The iterations of the Celeron can't be counted on two hands, and you'll quickly run out of toes trying to catalogue the differences. To the tune of 'Turkey in the Straw' then, and a-one and a-two and a-three and a:

There are three process technologies: 0.25micron (300A-533MHz), 0.18micron (566-

766MHz) and 0.13micron (1.0A-2.2GHz); there are four package types: SEPP (266-400MHz), PPGA (300A-533 MHz), FC-PGA (533A-1.10MHz) and FC-PGA2 (900-2200MHz). Interestingly, Intel describes the FC-PGA2 CPUs from 1.70GHz as just "478-pin package type"; within all package types there are two different pin-out forms (370 pins up to 1.40GHz and 478 pins from 1.70GHz); there are three bus speeds at 66/100/400 MHz. There are four "A" versions with 256KB of L2 cache run on two different bus speeds (66/100MHz), the rest run a 128KB L2 cache but two Celerons have no L2 cache (266 and 300). The PPGA process uses a nickel plated copper heat slug on top of the processor, the FC-PGA has no built-in heat amelioration while the FC-PGA2 incorporates an Integrated Heat Spreader (IHS). I suspect the IHS also prevents us from crushing the CPU core with an over enthusiastic application of force from a heatsink-fan combo. There are two processes at 1.10GHz (13micron/18micron) as well as two different L2 cache sizes (the "A" model has 256KB). The last 66MHz Celeron was the 766MHz. The last 100MHz Celeron runs at 1.40GHz, there are no 1.50/1.60GHz models, and the 1.70GHz model runs quad-pumped at 400MHz FSB speed. You don't get SIMD2 under 1.70GHz which is why it should be the minimum for a gamer upgrade (remember it's quad-pumped). And rest.

## Bluh bluh?

So which is the one for the modern gamer without the bucks for P4? Well the 1.7GHz is relatively cheap, and you can spend the change on a top shelf Hyper-Threaded, 533MHz FSB supported P4 motherboard (the 845PE or 845GE chipset).

After some tooth fairy visits, raiding the jam jar and a bit of birthday money it's dead easy to further upgrade to a 533MHz FSB CPU like a P4-2.26GHz or 2.40B, just in time for the pre-Christmas rush of new games. And yes, Doom 3 will probably be among them, although for Doom 3, you need to be saving up \$1000 for a next generation, DirectX 9.0 videocard.

Is it possible to upgrade to another Celeron, perhaps double the speed and save some money? Yes of course, but the ultimate bang depends on the motherboard, the BIOS and specifically the chipset. Celeron is not the devil. It's just one of those little red pixies with the hot pokers that stab, stab, stab you in the eyes. Seriously though, Celeron is a good choice for budget-conscious gamers who lack confidence in AMD for whatever reason. Try Celery today. It helps you see in the dark. And you know what that means. Yum yum!

**\*For colour.**



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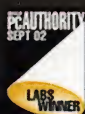
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# Cossacks

## The Best RTS Has Just Become Better....

One of the worlds most popular RTS - Cossacks - European Wars has just expanded again to complete a Trilogy of War. This Multi-Award winning series just keeps getting better and better with even more innovations and missions.



### Cossacks

The Original Multi-Award Winner

- Marvel at the sight of up to 8,000 individual units incorporating a fully functional 3D landscape.
- 16 rival nations, each with their own original graphics, unique economic and technological differences.
- Military formations; choose from a Line, Square or Box formation, complete with the Officer and a Drummer.
- A huge heirarchy of more than 300 upgrades.
- Over 85 missions and battles, including campaigns, tutorial missions, single missions, historical battles and a random map generator.
- 2 Technological Epochs: 17th and 18th Century.
- Civilians and their buildings can be conquered and become part of your growing colony.
- Up to 7 players in Multiplayer mode (Net and LAN)
- Includes a large encyclopaedia of the wars, units.



### Cossacks

The Art Of War - Addon

- 5 new campaigns (with more than 30 missions in total): Prussia, Austria, Saxony, Algeria, Poland
- New massive maps with different terrains.
- 2 new nations (Bavaria & Denmark)
- 6 new ships.
- 6 new single missions.
- 6 new historical battles.
- 4 different difficulty levels.
- Improved AI (workers automatically enter mines), Improved controls (New hotkeys)
- New multiplayer game modes: "Territory Capture"
- Giving orders in pause mode.
- New orders: guard, patrol, attack, ground command for cannons....
- A virtual camera records the game.



### Cossacks

Back To War - Stand Alone / Addon

- Thrilling real-time strategy game with historical back ground
- 20 nations to command
- Europe between the 16th and 18th centuries | Stand-alone game, other Cossacks games not required to play
- 101 new single missions
- 2 new nations: Switzerland and Hungary with a total of 8 new units
- Spectacular real-time battles with up to 8,000 units
- 4 different difficulty levels
- 3D landscapes offer strategic advantages
- 1 new camel riding unit for Algeria and Turkey: Bedouin
- New Automatic Championship System (ACS) charts online competition on the web
- 20 new building types for Switzerland and Hungary
- Extra: Mod with an additional 30 units and 3 cannons





## IN PREVIEW

THEY GIVE US THE CODE, WE GIVE YOU THE LOWDOWN

# GAMES

**I**f you paused long enough in your frenzied rush to grab the latest PCPP from the overcrowded shelf of your local NewsLink (or even Coles, eh supermarket land folks? - Ed) to actually take a look at what was on the cover, you would have noticed that this is our annual preview roundup issue, where we take a catalogue-like look at 50 of the major anticipated releases for 2003.

Such is the nature of PC games development,

we are fully confident that less than 50% of the titles mentioned between pages 46 and 57 will actually make it onto shelves in 2003. In some kind of celebration of this peculiarity of our industry, I thought it would be fun to give a brief guernsey to some of the games featured in our 2002 preview that didn't make it onto shelves last year.

Heading the list is of course Duke Nukem Forever, the perennially delayed FPS from 3DRealms, a company that hasn't produced a significant title since Duke Nukem 3D in 1996. We've included DNF again this year, more from a vague sense of duty than anything else, since we've long ceased to take this game, or indeed this developer, at all seriously.

Other disappointing no-shows included 1503AD, the purportedly high-detailed economic and trading game from Sunflowers. Thankfully, a demo is shortly to be released and we'll make sure it appears on CD PowerPlay for PCPP#86.

City of Heroes also failed to make an appearance last year, a shame as it was slated to boost the superhero strategy genre pioneered earlier in 2002 by Australia's own Freedom Force. City of Heroes was supposed to be a MMORPG, but perhaps the continued dominance of Everquest and the lacklustre sales of Sims Online have sent the boys at PaleStar back to the drawing board for a serious rethink.

Galleon still hasn't appeared on shelves yet, and it was featured in the 2001 preview as well! This promising adventure game was given a whole page to itself in the 2001 preview, a little box in the 2002 preview and now we haven't even bothered to cover it this year - vapourware for the new millennium? It's looking that way.

Regulars at the local games emporium would have noticed pre-order Hidden & Dangerous 2 boxes on shelves for a couple of months, only to watch them evaporate like morning dew. This WW2 tactical game is still delayed, and still appears no nearer to completion. Will Commandos 3 beat it like Commandos 2 beat it in early 2002?

Then there's Harpoon 4, another long-awaited sequel in a proud but now almost fossilised dynasty. Take command on the high seas in one of the best-looking naval sims ever, if it's ever actually released.

Moving on, constant readers would have enjoyed our Republic interview last issue, but may have puzzled at its continued absence from our shelves. We've given it another guernsey in the 2003 roundup, as it looks like a very tasty take on the ultra-niche genre of political simulator. Expect it soon? Only if you have faith.

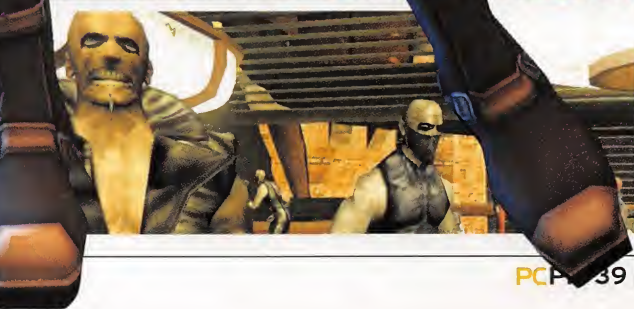
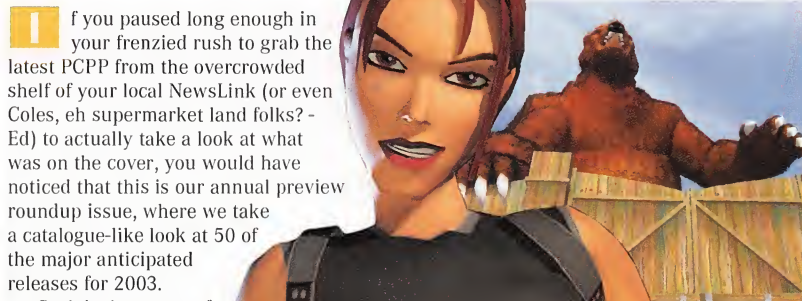
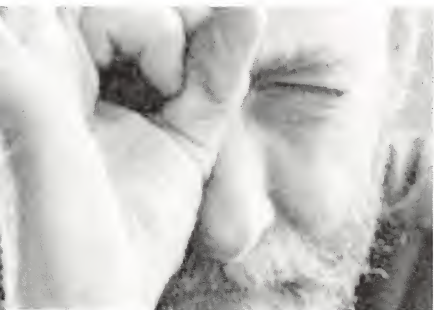
We also expected Lock On and Imperium Galactica 3 last year, and their absence was sorely felt, along with Outcast 2, Sovereign and even Unreal 2 itself only managed to escape being in the roundup again by the skin of its teeth.

So what does all this say about the PC games industry? That developers should pull their fingers out, and stop playing Counter-Strike on the studio LAN long enough to finish our games? That publishers shouldn't promise release dates so ridiculously early in the development cycle? Or that PCPP shouldn't do yearly roundups? Nah on that last one, we want to know what to expect from the year, and the only real question is, will it be a year of joy, bitter disappointment, or like 2002, a subtle mix of both?

In the coming months, we shall no doubt see.

Justin Hoffman  
letters@pcpowerplay.com.au

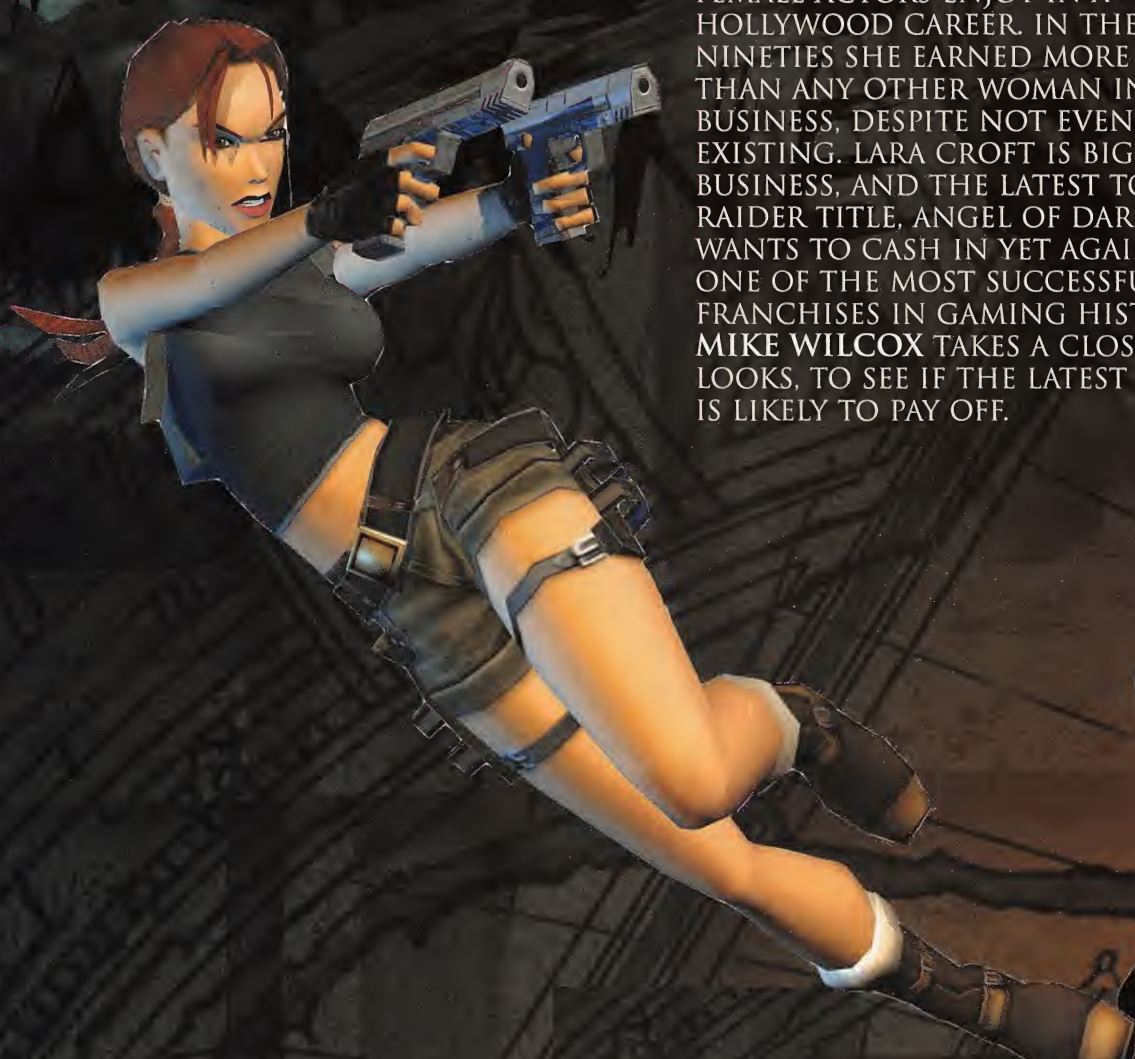
- 40 Tomb Raider  
Angel of Darkness
- 46 Games of 2003  
Massive Preview





# The Raider

SHE'S HAD FIVE TOP-SELLING GAMES, A MOVIE STARRING ANGELINA JOLIE AND MORE PUBLICITY THAT MOST FEMALE ACTORS ENJOY IN A HOLLYWOOD CAREER. IN THE MID-NINETIES SHE EARNED MORE MONEY THAN ANY OTHER WOMAN IN SHOW BUSINESS, DESPITE NOT EVEN EXISTING. LARA CROFT IS BIG BUSINESS, AND THE LATEST TOMB RAIDER TITLE, ANGEL OF DARKNESS WANTS TO CASH IN YET AGAIN ON ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL FRANCHISES IN GAMING HISTORY. **MIKE WILCOX** TAKES A CLOSER LOOKS, TO SEE IF THE LATEST VENTURE IS LIKELY TO PAY OFF.

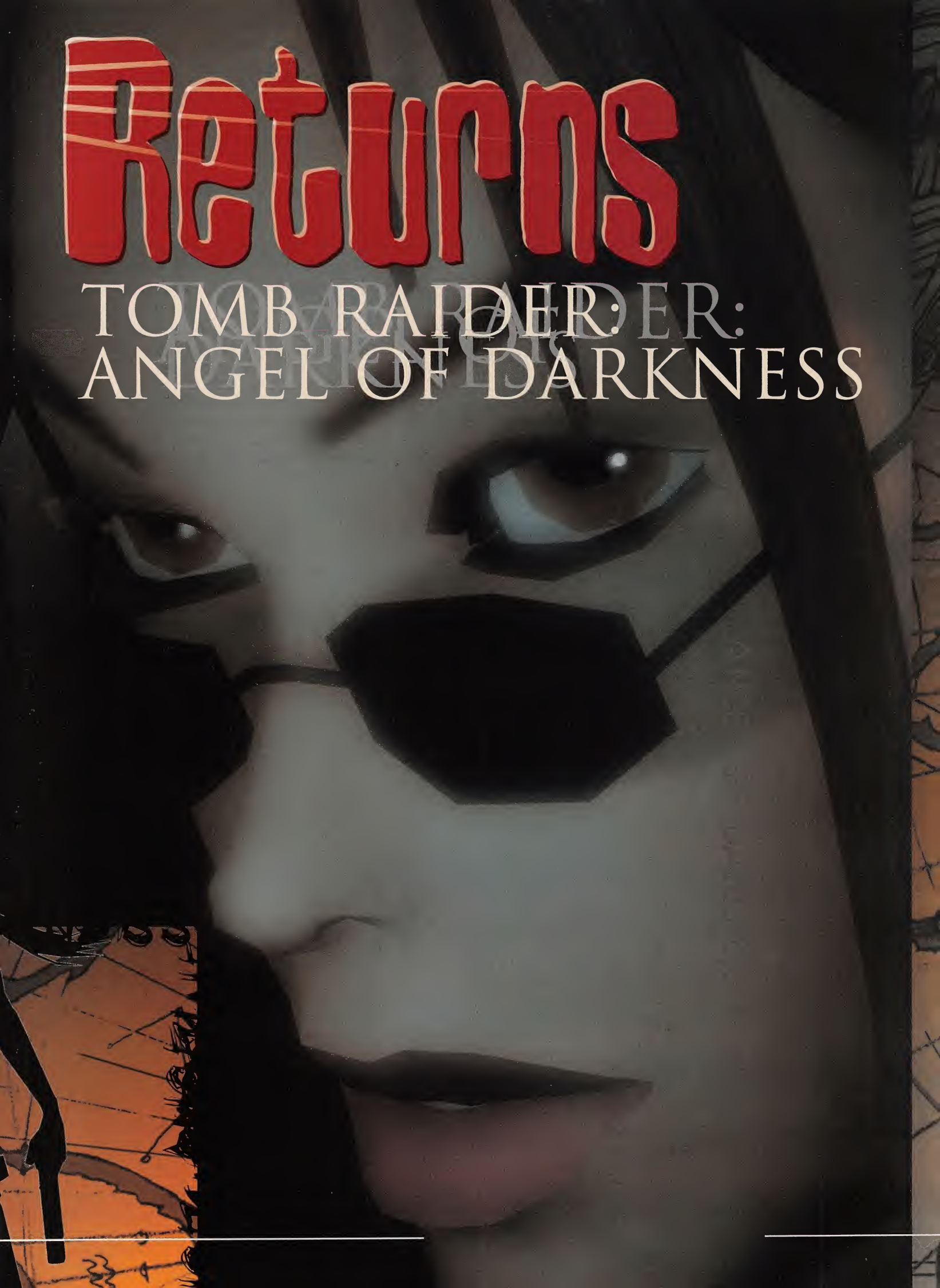
A 3D rendered image of Lara Croft from the game Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness. She is shown in a dynamic pose, floating or falling through the air. She is wearing her signature black tank top, cargo shorts, and a utility belt. She is holding a blue and silver handgun in her right hand, pointing it towards the viewer. Her expression is one of determination. The background is a dark, textured surface with faint, glowing lines that suggest an ancient or mysterious environment. In the bottom right corner, there is a black silhouette of a person holding a gun, looking towards Lara.

DEVELOPER: CORE  
PUBLISHER: EIDOS  
DISTRIBUTOR: GAMENATION  
DUE: Q4 2003

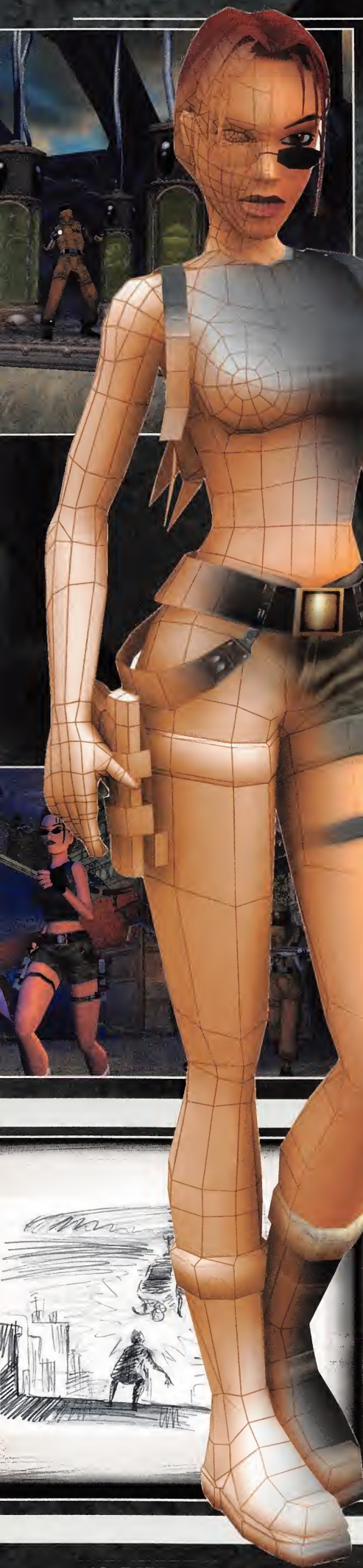


# Returns

TOMB RAIDER: ER:  
ANGEL OF DARKNESS







These days you can mention the name Lara Croft to a librarian, solicitor, or even mechanic and chances are they've all heard the name somewhere in their travels. Pretty phenomenal for a female video game character wouldn't you say? So just what is it about the world's most famous cultural gaming icon that has caught the attention of the media, movie goers, gamers and general public alike? Sure, a fair amount of it had to do with a revolutionary game franchise's innovation and technical brilliance (and of course the enormous breasts), but no one could have predicted just how popular the game's lead character would become, especially not the team who created her at Core Design in Derby, U.K.

"To be honest," said Adrian Smith, Operations Director at Core Design, "the first idea wasn't the character Lara, the idea was Tomb Raider. Lara came around because she was the type of character we wanted for the game. Though we knew we might be onto something special when nearing the end of the first game, people started taking an interest in her history. They were asking us when her birthday was, and even where she went to school. So a bunch of us hastily wrote down a few stupid things, and to date they've actually stuck."

### Tools down time

Since her very first archaeological outing in 1996, Lara Croft's adventures have spanned four complete games in as many years, followed by a fifth game, *Chronicles*, which deliberately revisited much of the previous gameplay and locations while the fate and future of Lara was left hanging in the balance at the end of the fourth game. This not only cut the team at Core Design some slack from their arduous annual Christmas deadline for a fresh game, but also gave them the chance to start planning the next all important phase in the Tomb Raider juggernaut.



### Tools up time

Around the time work on the next series began, the PS2 was just seeing the light of day. This, along with the latest graphical advancements for PCs got the team excited about what this was able to offer in terms of technology and power.

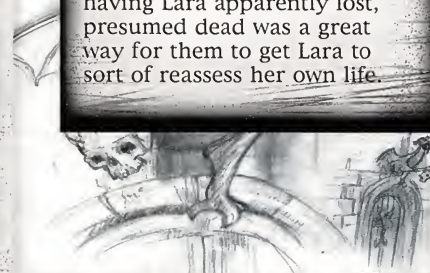
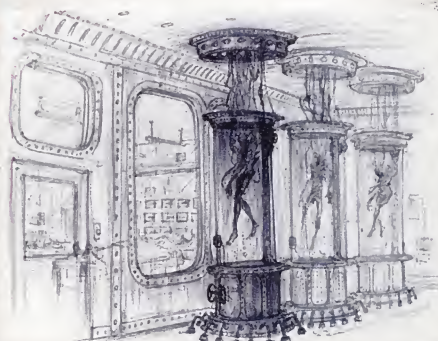
"Development on the new game for both platforms finally got under way in mid 2000" said Adrian, "The initial months we spent thrashing out a new story, working out some of the early game elements, freshening up the look of Lara, and going over lots of Tomb Raider history, seeing what was successful with gamers, and what didn't work."

The team eventually set themselves a number of goals: One was, rather than creating a single story that plays out across one game, they wanted to write a story that spanned across a series of games. So with this decided they sat down and started writing the story to fit across three games. Other goals the team set were incorporating completely new gameplay elements for the series, and while they agreed some of these risked moving away from the traditional Tomb Raider style, both the team and gamers had expressed interest for some time in seeing such new elements as more character interaction, a secondary playable character, as well as a way of tailoring Lara so each player could enjoy a more personal gaming experience (Phwoar! Oh sorry, sorry - Ed), all of which are being implemented in the new series.

In having Lara apparently lost and presumed dead over this period of time, the team knew it was the perfect chance to do something different with her, and while they couldn't very well turn her into some kind of drug lord or mass murderer on her return, as that is simply not the Lara Croft everyone knows, or the type of character they spent 5 years shaping, but they knew they wanted to put her in a foreign environment, up against powers she's never had to deal with, and a completely new set of challenges to face. So they came up with the idea to have Lara framed for murder in Paris, not just a one off murder, but a series of grotesque murders known across Europe as "The Monstrum Murders".

### LARA MIA

To date, Core Design has done five Tomb Raider games in the space of five years, which even they agree is quite a lot, so they decided at the end of the forth adventure; *The Last Revelation*, that would be the last game in the series, so the story ended with Lara supposedly trapped in a temple presumed missing, and her body never recovered. The main reason for them doing this was they wanted a clean start on this next series. In having Lara apparently lost, presumed dead was a great way for them to get Lara to sort of reassess her own life.







## You see officer, it all started like this

The opening scene of the game sees Lara contacted by her one time mentor Werner Von Croy, who asks her to meet with him in Paris, claiming he's become mixed up in something too deep. Reluctant at first, as she still holds him responsible for the events at the temple in Last Revelation, she gives in and goes to him in Paris, where they get into a heated argument about him leaving her for dead under a few thousand tonnes of sandstone in Egypt. Core Design's Adrian Smith said, "The full details of these events are not going to be made completely clear at this point in time to gamers, but what they do see is Von Croy fly out of his chair, pushing Lara to the ground. The next thing you see is Lara regaining consciousness on the floor covered in blood, Von Croy is dead, police are surrounding the location, and Lara is standing there holding her gun, so she has little option but to make a quick escape to then try and work out what has taken place".

So during this first part of the game, you're not sure whether you carried out the murder or not. It's only after a number of more revealing follow up FMVs that revisit the same scene in Von Croy's office that further details are revealed. No longer a famous tomb raider, but a suspected murderer and on the run, Lara has no one to turn to, she can't hide as she is too well known to be seen in public places, so her only alternative is to lie low in the seedier side of Paris and a much darker side of life than she is used to.



## Location, location

This first offering in the new trilogy will be split across three solid chunks of gameplay, each set in different locations. The first part of the game takes place in cosmopolitan Paris and the city's seedier side, and will have a familiar Tomb Raider adventure feel to it only with much less gun totting action and plenty of stealth. The middle part of the game will see the action rev up with the return of the series' trademark puzzles, switches, running, jumping, swinging, and gunplay. The settings are the famous Musee du Louvre and the maze ridden Catacombs beneath the city. The third and final stage will be the first chance to play as the new co-star of the game, Kurtis Trent. With a different set of skills and unique psychic powers, players will need to swap and play as both characters right through to the game's final showdown. Prague is the location for this final chapter, at the hi-tech headquarters of one Pieter Van Eckhardt.

## Talk time

But back to the very start, and Lara is without her usual swag of weaponry to begin with, so various stealth manoeuvres will be the only defence against enemies. This time will also be spent gathering information from various characters by interacting with them, which is one of the new elements of gameplay. This contact with the game's NPCs plays a significant role in the first stages of the game, as you will need to draw certain information out of them in order to work out what's going on. Taking an aggressive or passive approach when communicating with others will result in different responses. Unlike the traditional method of endless mouse clicks at on screen responses until

## BAD BOYS, BAD BOYS

Headed up by one insane 14th century genius known to his followers as the Black Alchemist, and to us as Pieter Van Eckhardt, the Cabal organisation has been trying to find a way to revive an ancient race called the Nephilim since the 1300's. Eckhardt believes by using the hidden powers within the five Obscura paintings, he can resurrect the race, do away with human civilisation, and rule over his newly found world.

sooner or later you've read every possible option (or you're just prompted with the answer), players will have more control over retrieving the type of information they need.

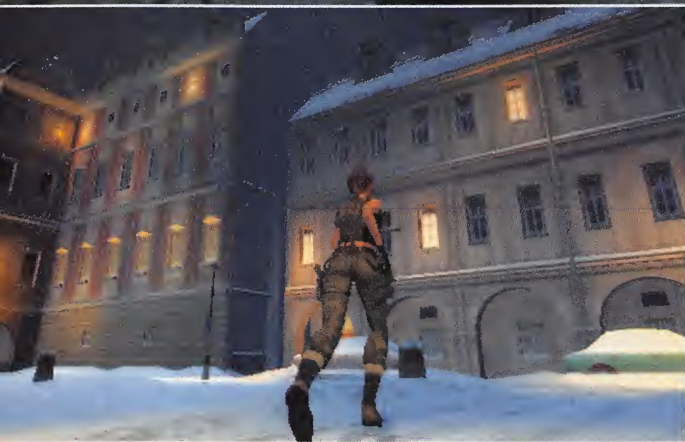
"There are multiple branches in the conversations" said Adrian, "For example, Madame Carvier, a friend of Von Croys, will tell you about a diary she has of his, but if you choose to respond aggressively she won't give it to you." The thing is you'll still eventually get access to all the necessary information to keep progressing through the game, you just might end up having to talk to three or four other people to get it, but by using the right tactics you'll have access to this information a lot earlier. As well as finding out about items such as Von Croy's diary, the missing Obscura paintings, and the game's other characters, you'll be told about some of the various routes you can take to get to new locations. Again, this simply helps point you in the right direction (literally) earlier than if you had to find out on your own.

## Lock in three thanks Eddie

The main reason for introducing multiple paths throughout the game is to offer each player a different experience. One aspect







An example of how this works is in the courtyard at the start of the game. There are several ways to get out of this area. The easiest one, designed for those who still need help dressing in the mornings, is hide around the corner until an NPC eventually comes and opens the door so you can just walk out onto the street. A more respectable way is to push a bin into place, climb on top of it, then

then opens up a different path.

Ultimately, no matter what paths you go down throughout the game, you'll always be guided to the same end point. "It is quite linear," said Adrian, "When I look back on the whole Tomb Raider history, Tomb Raider 3 was probably the hardest game because we gave you a key, and said now go and find out where you use that key (laughs), and players wondered around for months trying to find out where they used it. You know, because people were saying they wanted freedom to explore, they wanted big environments, where in actual fact they didn't. They wanted big environments, but they really wanted to know where they were going. So we learned from that, and with Angel of Darkness we're going to tell you where you're going to go, but let you have a little bit of freedom just to go different ways. It makes a big difference in the game!"



hop onto a wall, and walk to some stairs. A third option adds to those steps, with a climb up another ladder, a risky jump, clamber up a drain pipe, shimmy across some guttering, up another drainpipe, and onto the roof, and then drop down the other side of the building. And with each degree of difficulty comes greater rewards, like accessing secrets areas and bonus items such as extra health and ammo.

### Building a better Lara

Another new element of gameplay and also one of the other key reward features, allows players to improve some of Lara's abilities. These come in the shape of upper and lower body upgrades. An upper body upgrade for example might increase her grip ability, offering the potential to climb different vertical surfaces or allow her to climb for longer before she loses her grip and falls.

In a similar way that important game details are eventually revealed to players that don't discover them on their own, you will also be given these required upgrades at a later stage in the game regardless. Players that do seek out these various upgrades earlier through fully exploring the various routes are rewarded for doing so. An example of how this could work to a player's advantage is by finding a crowbar, then using it to jimmy open a door you earn a lower body upgrade, then you might choose to go back a level and kick a door in with the aid of your new strength and pick something else up. An upper body upgrade might mean you can hang onto a ledge long enough to crawl around a corner to a bonus item, whereas if you didn't have the upgrade, you'd simply drop down to the ground, which

of the Tomb Raider series that kept gamers captivated for hours on end, other than voluptuous curves, was the chance to roam freely, uncovering many of the game's secrets. The team at Core Design wanted to encourage this activity once again by introducing the option of various paths to get from point A to B, and also reward players for locating secrets in hard to find, or difficult to reach places. A novice player for example, could complete the game and maybe see 80% of it, and only discover 60% of the secrets. But for those with the skills and a little more ambition to explore the environments, different routes and rewards will become available.

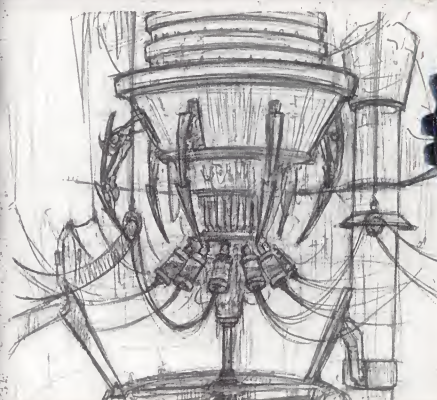
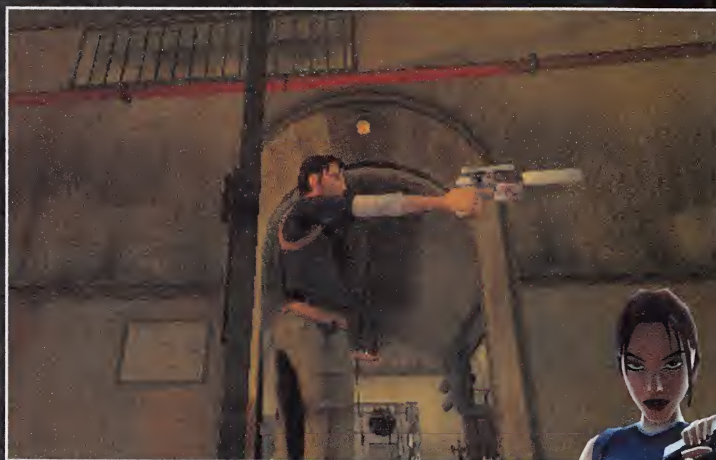
### I WANT A SECOND CHANCE!

In the past if Lara slipped or placed a foot wrong and started falling towards certain death there was nothing a player could do but watch. Now with a 'last chance' grab feature players won't have to kiss Lara goodbye so often. Appearing as a typical on screen fuel gauge, players must use the feature wisely, although earning body upgrades helps slow down how much of it is used up. For example, you might be crawling along a dangerous ledge and suddenly slip off, but provided your gauge is charged, you can use the second chance grab to get out of trouble.

### That wasn't in the original draft

Of course there's no such thing as a decent storyline without some sort of bizarre twist thrown in, and Angel of Darkness packs a beauty. These missing 14th century Obscura paintings that everyone is trying to get their hands on throughout the game contain special powers when all brought together. Eckhardt's sinister plan for them is to give him the power he needs to revive an ancient race of not so nice people called the Nephilim, who naturally want to rule the world.

New playable character on the block Kurtis Trent is the last remaining member of an ancient mystical order called the Lux Veritatis who were responsible for splitting the paintings up in the first place due to said evil powers hidden within them, so







he's out to ensure Eckhardt doesn't get hold of them. And then Lara, well she's inadvertently caught up in the middle of the whole thing, and in realising the Eckhardt is intent on wiping out the earth's population, she too is out to stop him. This sees both Lara and Kurtis working together in the later part of the game (Phwoar! Woof woof! - Ed).

### Meet Kurtis, he'll be your co-star for the game

In not wanting to radically change Lara's skills and abilities, Core Design has thrown caution into the wind and introduced a new playable character, Kurtis Trent. "We were quite conscious of introducing a second character" said Adrian, "Because you know, it's Tomb Raider and Lara Croft and the two have (always) gone together, but we'd already made the decision that when you played Kurtis, you should never lose that link with Lara. It's never a takeover, it's never like you're done with Lara, so now go and play with Kurtis. The two actually work together. And you'll always come back to Lara, as there's no way of finishing this game with Kurtis."

This has given the team the chance to create extra abilities and moves for the new character, offering fans of the series fresh game elements, and at the same time not having to mess with Lara's skill set. Essentially, Kurtis is a tougher, stronger character and will be in line for mainly the dirty work. While both characters will have certain moves the other one can't do, like only Lara can swim, and only Kurtis has a double jump move, they share most of the common moves. However, Kurtis has two unique features of particular interest: his psychic abilities and his throwing weapon called a Chirugai blade.

His special telekinetic powers allow him to move objects such as keys that are out of reach, or push doors open by using his mind. He can also use his powers to see areas up ahead or even around corners. His main weapon, the Chirugai, is a deadly disc-shaped device with boomerang-like abilities. It has two ways of working - when running and using it, it acts like a yoyo in that he throws it in a straight line at a target and it comes straight back, or he can use his psychic powers to pre-target several different targets in a room and the weapon will try and hit each one of them. He will also pack a gun with laser targeting. While Kurtis will only be playable for the last 20% of the game, he features regularly through the game in many of the cut scenes.

Core Design are said to be very happy with how Kurtis has turned out, and have even hinted that they would consider a spin off game starring him, depending on how well players respond to this new face.

### The shape of things to come

From what has been shown of the game so far, players can expect by far the richest graphical detail the series has seen to date, an upgraded control system, and thanks to a polygon increase of 10 times the earlier model, Lara is looking, swaying, and jiggling the best she ever has (Phwoar! Woof Woof! Yeow! Etc! - Ed), even if she is now more in proportion with the average, well toned brunette gym junkie. The number of new animations she has is now also 10 times the previous collection to accommodate her range of new moves. As expected, the PC version will look superior to the PS2 version, and has been developed simultaneously alongside the console offering. The team claims to have spent more time on the PC version, ensuring it works well with a proper PC controller, and also implementing such graphical touches as environment textures, bump mapping, and reflective surfaces.

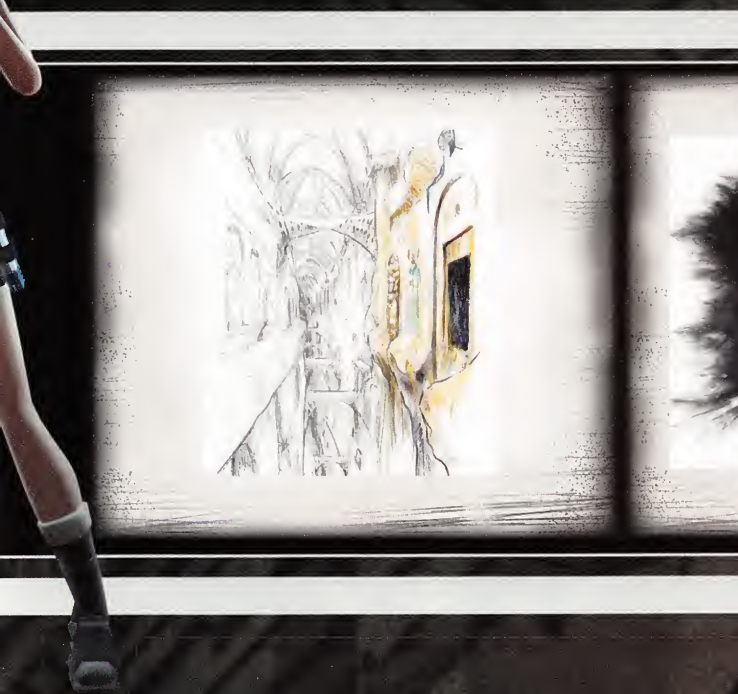
As most will know, Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness is now well overdue for release, having slipped past two official launch dates already, the first in November 2002, and then February this year. At the moment it's currently on track for release in late June. The official reason

for these delays are not exactly clear, but one can assume Core Design is making doubly sure it does everything it possibly can to return the series to its former days of glory with a rock solid killer game.

With the added exposure of Tomb Raider's box office success, the Lara Croft brand has become more mass market than the games could ever hope to be, and perhaps that not such a bad thing. From what they've shown us of the game earlier this year, the team looks well on track for delivering the 'come back' game they set out to produce that will reinstate everyone's favourite tomb raiding temptress to her former gaming icon status.

### LARA AND TRENT

Lara meets Kurtis Trent, the new playable character quite early in the game's storyline, though it's not until towards the end that players can control him. Kurtis is the last remaining descendant of a mystical order called the Lex Veritatis, which over the years the Cabal has systematically killed off. He wants to avenge his father's murder, and also needs to try and stop the Cabal getting their hands on the Obscura paintings. His telekinetic powers and weapon will undoubtedly bring a refreshing dynamic to the game play.









# THE GAMES OF 2003

**A comprehensive look at 50 top anticipated titles for the year, collated by George Soropos**

Our eighth year as Australia's leading PC gaming magazine couldn't have begun any less auspiciously, with the PlayStation2 flush with Christmas-flavoured success and outselling PC games by 8%. But fear not, for as the next twelve pages reveal, there are some super-tasty titles on the way for 2003. Constant readers will of course recognise a few of these titles from our 2002 preview way back in PCPP#70 - that's right, even 15 months later some of these developers still haven't shipped their hugely overdue games. And yes, Duke Nukem Forever is in this roundup, though more from a sense of the essential absurdity of life than because we were able to report any actual new information. But there is a screenshot you may not have seen. If you were living under a rock. In a cave. Anyway, from this lot there should be at least 10 games you can salivate for all year, and if they actually get released this year, why, so much the better! Once you've drooled all over this roundup, why not write to PCPP and demand larger and more in-depth previews for your favourite games? Who knows, we might even listen







Developer: Lost Toy  
Publisher: Infogrames  
Due: Q3

Battle Engine Aquila is a first person perspective war game that puts the player bang in the middle of an epic, real-time battle being fought between two huge armies. It's not often we see pure arcade shoot-em-ups of this calibre on the PC. In fact it's been an age. You are the pilot of the Battle Engine Aquila, an advanced combat vehicle capable of flight, among other things, and armed with some very serious hardware. Keep an eye out if you like eye candy with bite.



Developer: Techland  
Publisher: Techland  
Due: Q3

This has the potential to be something special. Take on the role of Bolt Logan, a hard bitten mercenary running away from a murder he didn't commit. This FPS has it all: a mass of cool weapons, drivable vehicles, a detailed storyline and mission design. The graphics are superb and multiplayer promises to be interesting considering the variety of vehicles on offer. There are four separate physics models in the game, and each is used depending on what your character is interacting with.



Developer: Codemasters  
Publisher: Infogrames  
Due: May

This eagerly awaited rally title will feature much-improved car physics, more decision making and even more detail than before. The main championship game is a gruelling series of races across eight international rallies: Japan, Spain, USA, Sweden, Finland, Greece, Australia and the UK. Between-race preparation and repairs are more crucial than ever in CMR 3 and the handling of the cars is said to be the best yet. Online play will also be tweaked and improved over earlier PC incarnations of the series.



Developer: Pyro  
Publisher: Eidos  
Due: Q3

The Spanish developer Pyro is presently working on the third instalment of this excellent strategy series. The first instalment of this series was criticised for being too difficult, the second a bit too easy. Will they get it right this time? Not much information is available as to what changes are being made but if the popularity of the earlier titles is anything to go by Pyro will be making a big effort to maintain their momentum.



## BLACK & WHITE 2

Developer: Lionhead Studios ■ Publisher: EA ■ Available: Q3

At last your giant zebra will be good for something

**B**lack and White was a uniquely innovative title from ground breaking developer Peter Molyneux and proved to be an almost irresistible lure to strategy gamers tired of the same old formula. In the original game you ruled in a true God like fashion over a tribe of primitive villagers who wanted little more out of life than food, wood and a bit of worship every now and then. They were not capable of interacting with each other, neither on an individual level nor as a community.

Black and White 2 will introduce quite a lot of improvements that add to the depth and attention to detail of an already impressive game. The management of towns and villagers is being made more complex in terms of the capabilities of both but simpler in terms of automation. While you'll still have as much control over your subjects as you wish, a new improved AI for the villagers will make them more able to look after themselves without constant intervention.

To make gameplay more enjoyable and less of a chore players will be able to use a new multi-pickup system that allows the player to collect a number of objects at once instead of being forced to use one at a time. Black & White 2 will apparently also have

much more realistic water. Your creature will be able to wade in the seas and lakes of the new world without floaties, or a swimming costume, and use the water to take a short cut here and there.

Players will be offered the choice of being a violent god who aggressively conquers other settlements, or a nurturing and protective god who protects his or her villagers and towns by building walls, towers other improvements to produce a city that attracts and converts enemy followers to your cause.

The player will be able to control large armies made up of warriors from the villages, towns and cities. As well as trained warriors you will have access to archers and spear throwers and other more specialised units, some which you'll use in battle, others which you'll send on covert missions. Each tribe will also be able to manufacture unique weapons; Japanese swordsman will use katanas while Norseman will use broadswords. While it is not definite at this time Lionhead are also hoping to also have trade as a part of the interaction between towns.

Also new to the game are epic miracles. These will have devastating effects upon villagers and many of these miracles will

have their own detailed graphical effects on the land, buildings and other objects within the game to make them look as spectacular as miracles should. What they will be exactly is still unknown.

Lionhead's previous track record indicates they won't announce some of the most innovative new ideas until the game gets close to release. In other words there's more to come than what we've just mentioned so at this point Black & White 2 is promising to be a very worthy sequel.





# BREED

Developer: Brat Design ■ Publisher: CDV ■ Available: Q2

The world's first Halo clone!



In the year 2600 Earth forces find themselves outmaneuvered and vanquished by a cunning, numerous and powerful alien force known only as the Breed. Earth is under alien control and of course only one battle cruiser is intact enough to have a go at reclaiming the planet. Staffed by GRUNTS (Genetically Revived UNiversal Tactical Sentients), the USC Darwin must use the element of surprise to strike before Breed defenses can be fully implemented.

Which is of course where you come in. Coordinating with the resistance forces on Earth, troops from the USC Darwin must execute mission after mission to knock the Breed out of shape, spearheaded naturally by the player character as part of a larger team or on his or her own. Okay, so it does look and sound a lot like Halo so far but it isn't.

Breed's brilliant graphics engine allows a seamless presentation of the entire planet, from cave to stratosphere! Starting from the outer atmosphere, players are dropped in landing craft through the layers down towards the terrain, then land, disembark and enter the action without a pause.

Vehicles are expected to take a



large role in the title, and in a similar manner to Halo, players will be able to jump into them as they are encountered through the missions. Most exciting is the prospect of the airborne vehicles, even the dropship will apparently be available to pilot. This will have the best effect in multiplayer, where players can join together to operate larger ships, with one player as pilot, and gunners in each turret.

There are over 25 single player missions, with their design giving players more than one pathway to success. The aim is to increase

replay value; for example, having the same sections of missions being playable from both space and the planet's surface. Similarly, many of the missions will have multiple objectives, to further increase the freedom of play for the liberated gamer.

The game's proprietary Mercury engine is in its early stages, but is said to be able to run the massive outdoor environments smoothly on low powered laptops so you thankfully shouldn't need to do a Doom 3 upgrade on your PC to see the game at its best.



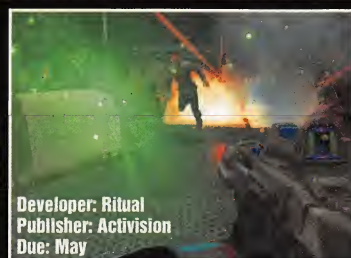
## DUKE NUKEM FOREVER



Developer: 3DRealms  
Publisher: Take2  
Due: BWAHAHA

Oddly enough we've never seen this screenshot before. It's been up on the site for months, and it is just a shot of that same old miner from 1999 just from a slightly different angle, but hey, we stopped caring round about Christmas 2001. Duke Nukem Whenever, that's our take.

## ELITE FORCE 2



Developer: Ritual  
Publisher: Activision  
Due: May

Elite Force 2 promises big improvements over its predecessor. It boasts a new concept in level design allowing the player to complete tasks in a variety of ways instead of the linear structure of the original game. Levels will also be much more in line with the Trek ethos of exploring 'strange new worlds' and will have expansive alien outdoor areas to poke around in.

## FAR CRY



Developer: Crytek  
Publisher: Ubi Soft  
Due: Q4

Crytek's heavily scripted tactical shooter offers some of the lushest environments seen. Some are saying that Far Cry is a potential Doom-killer with regards to technology; we'll have to wait and see. The game has been described as a mix of HALO and Half-Life, although the former is probably a bit more on the mark in that it takes place largely out-of-doors in a team-based tactical shooter format. It's a bit more sophisticated than Serious Sam but not as unforgiving as something like Ghost Recon.

## GHOST MASTER



Developer: Sick Puppies  
Publisher: Empire  
Due: Q4

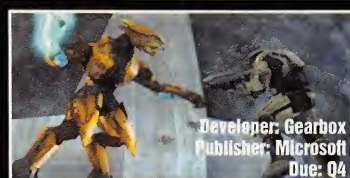
The UK dev team headed by Aussie Greg Barnett (formerly of Teeny Weeny and Discworld fame) put together some weird and wacky ideas in a so-called management game. The premise is that you are the master of a haunted house that has recently been bought and moved into by a living, human family. Gameplay is reminiscent of the Sims as you manage the activities of your ghostly cohorts to try and scare the new owners out of their wits, and out of the house.





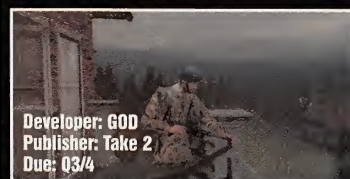
Developer: Vivendi  
Publisher: Vivendi  
Due: 2003

Ground Control came from nowhere in early 2000 and redefined 3D RTS. Now Ground Control 2 is set to do it all over again: more detailed environments, more complex strategies, dynamic weather and terrain types, dozens of differently devilish weapons to select and no doubt a pumping techno soundtrack. Always with the pumping techno soundtrack. Expect a more detailed preview when actual details about the game are released.



Developer: Gearbox  
Publisher: Microsoft  
Due: Q4

Initially developed for Xbox by Bungie Studios, Halo: Combat Evolved is a science-fiction first person shooter that takes place on a mysterious alien ringworld a la Larry Niven's novels of the same name. The PC adaptation is being developed by Texas-based Gearbox Software and based on the game's original concept, with some additions such as an extensive multiplayer capability. The game boasts some great vehicle based action and well designed levels.



Developer: GOD  
Publisher: Take 2  
Due: Q3/4

The original was a tactical masterpiece, and thus too difficult for the average gamer to cope with. H&D2 offers all new locations from North Africa to the jungles of South East Asia and throws in some new weapons and useable vehicles for good measure. The already good AI has been improved even more making your opponents a bit smarter and more aware. A new multiplayer feature is also included improving the variety and stability over the original. A must for WWII fans who enjoy a challenge.



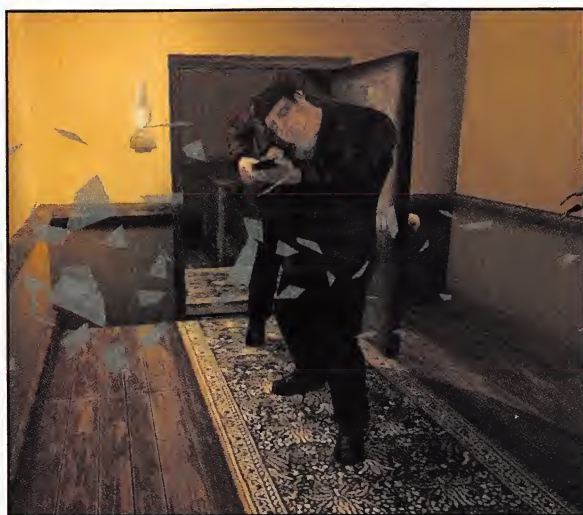
Developer: Novalegic  
Publisher: Empire  
Due: Q2

Highland Warriors is a RTS game covering from the beginning of Scotland (843 AD) through to its struggle for independence from England (14th century). The game features over 30 one-player missions in four historically based campaigns. You can play as one of three Scottish clans or as the British in singleplayer games or multiplayer (up to 8 players) on a LAN connection or on the Internet using the gamespy server. The Atlas 3D engine displays up to 200,000 polygons per screen and looks damn sexy.

# CALL OF THE CTHULHU: DARK CORNERS OF THE EARTH

Developer: Headfirst ■ Publisher: Fishtank ■ Available: Q3

Go downstairs and deal with that swamp-thing with a chainsaw



**H**P Lovecraft's seminal horror novels were way ahead of their time and form a body of work that has had more influence over today's masters of horror fiction and film than any other single source. His creation of the Cthulhu mythology predated JRR Tolkien's Middle Earth and took horror into the realms of fantasy and science fiction before those genres were even given names! That it has taken so long for a developer to use his work as the basis of a game is a bit of a bummer, but now that the task has been taken up it looks as though this will be a game worth watching for.

Call of Cthulhu - Dark Corners of the Earth is set in the 1920s. Private eye Jack Walters, uncovers a dark secret nestled within the decaying fishing village of Innsmouth. Determined to uncover the truth, Jack descends into the macabre world of Cthulhu, the

sleeping celestial being whose telepathic dreams inspire cults and ghastly deeds. Innsmouth is in the hands of The Order, a draconian organization stained with the blood of the innocent and steeped in unholy rituals.

The player will take the role of one of four investigators who unearth the horror below this enigmatic New England town. Using H.P. Lovecraft's fantastic short stories as a guide, Cthulhu takes the player through a variety of sinister locations such as maze-like tunnels and an ominous insane asylum. Horrific monsters and dreadful events adversely affect the character's sanity, and psychological conditions like vertigo and schizophrenia are recreated through subtle manipulation of graphics and sound effects.

To further involve the player in the story, Call of Cthulhu does not

feature a permanent on-screen interface. To assess health the player must look down at the character's body for injuries, and to check for ammo players must open the revolver chamber to count the remaining rounds in their gun. A journal keeps track of evidence and clues that the character unearths during his adventure. By the end of each story, the player will have a complete account of their character's exploits and can print them out to read like a Lovecraft novel.

NPCs are very important, if not vital, to the player's progression through the game. In addition to being able to talk to them and find out useful information, the player can also get them to follow and perform certain tasks (defending, attacking a target, keeping watch and so on).

The mix of action, atmosphere and terror along with some very tasty graphics make this another possible surprise hit of the coming year.



# DEUS EX 2: THE INVISIBLE WAR

Developer: Ion Storm ■ Publisher: Eidos ■ Available: Q3

We'll probably praise this one to death as well

**A**nother game with a big reputation to live up to, that Deus Ex 2 can become an even bigger land mark than its predecessor, we can only hope. The game is set 20 years after the first title, and with new protagonists. JC Denton, the biomechanical butt-kicker from the first game, isn't a playable character; but he will play a major role in the game. The gamer's character is actually cloned from JC's DNA.

Deus Ex 2 will feature multiple methods of gameplay, based on which choices the player makes during the game. The gameplay can lean more towards full-on action or complete stealth, and a ways in between. In fact Ion Storm decided to work with their proprietary engine in favor of their original choice, the latest Unreal engine, because the team felt that the Unreal engine would be unable to support the vastly different styles of gameplay they are

planning to include in DX2.

As the characters in the game get enhanced with Nano-machines, they will be able to support a number of different augmentations that effect different body parts. For example, an augmentation canister for the legs might offer extra jumping height and running speed, or it might make the character run completely silently, of course once the choice is made it can't be undone. By encountering different augmentations and upgrading different skills, the player could shape a Rambo-type character who fires a rocket launcher as easily as a pistol, or a Solid-Snake type stealth expert who can knock an enemy unconscious with one hit from a baton, or any number of other combinations.

There are two types of augmentations in DX2: normal ones and black-market mods, most of which are quite powerful but have

significant drawbacks that will leave the character weakened during or after use of that particular mod.

One of the problems with Deus Ex was the unsophisticated enemy AI, which will thankfully be improved in the sequel. Different creatures and troops will work together, and non-player characters will hopefully no longer be completely stupid. Expect a form of pack AI with some enemies, and a number of new creatures and tricks that will up the difficulty ante subtly.

Images from the game show off a nice cyberpunk sense of style, much like the worlds created by Philip K. Dick and William Gibson, and the graphics engine will be utilising some great effects like dynamic shadows that help those trying a stealthy style of gameplay. While the new physics engine allows pretty much everything in the environment to be interacted with.



Developer: Relic  
Publisher: Sierra/Vivendi  
Due: Q4

RTS at its best. Homeworld brought another dimension to the strategy genre with epic battles, settings and an atmospheric game world that has rarely been matched. Homeworld 2 will develop this theme with an even bigger stage and a lot more detail. There are literally no details on the new features as yet so keep an eye on the official homepage.



Developer: Philos  
Publisher: C&V  
Due: Q2

An epic, story-based, singleplayer strategy game set in space. Colonisation and planetary development is handled as a turn based strategy game while space combat is handled in real-time within a different engine. This combination gives players the best of both worlds and action and makes IG3 unique. The presentation of this one is superb and the space ship graphics are gorgeous and its story based action is a nice change to the dry conquest style gameplay these titles normally suffer from.



Developer: Lucas Arts  
Publisher: The Collective  
Due: Q2

Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom, set in the Far East in 1935, plunges Indy into a rather nasty predicament. As the game begins the Black Dragon Triad and a German mercenary, Albrecht Von Beck, have formed an unholy alliance in the hopes of acquiring the Heart of the Dragon, a black pearl that gives its possessor the power to mould minds. We're guessing that after the total disaster of their last Indy title Lucas Arts will be making an extra effort to do this right.



Developer: Codemasters  
Publisher: Infogrames  
Due: Q1

You all know what Indy Racing is don't you? Americans driving round and round in circles at very high speed! 14 tracks, 27 cars and 15 races, all in a US TV-style presentation. A fully authentic Indy 500 mode features all the spectacle and excitement of the most attended single-day sporting event in the world. Make it through Bump Day to compete as one of the drivers and race 500 miles on the world-famous Brickyard circuit.

HOMEWORLD 2

IMPERIUM GALACTICA 3

INDIANA JONES

INDY RACING LEAGUE





Developer: nFusion  
Publisher: Infogrames  
Due: Q4

Responsible for The Deadly Dozen and even though the game didn't set the sales charts on fire it showed that nFusion was capable of creating some serious first/third person combat action. You are the U.S. Army Special Forces sniper in 1968 and your job is to locate elusive enemy soldiers and pick them off one-by-one. Not much is known about the details of the game but it looks like one to watch out for.



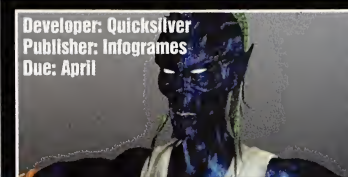
Developer: SSI  
Publisher: Ubisoft  
Due: Q4

Each aircraft within Lock On: Modern Air Combat is rendered in exceptional detail and performs, apparently, just like its real world counterpart. Players can choose from eight U.S. and Russian jets that range from tank killing A-10 Warthogs to air superiority fighters like the F-15C Eagle and the Su-27 Flanker. This is one sweet looking flight sim, a genre too rarely visited. The official website still has a wish list running so if you want to add any features to the game, drop SSI a line.



Developer: Warthog  
Publisher: Vivendi  
Due: Q4

Hundreds of years in the future several races occupy a host of solar systems and are discovering new planets on a regular basis. Huge conglomerates vie for rich resources on every new world resulting in fighting, smuggling and the emergence of pirate clans. Mace Griffin: Bounty Hunter is on the trail of his friend's killers, and he isn't taking any prisoners. In terms of gameplay think Halo with a dash of Rogue Leader. Mace is a shooter with a few nice tricks.



Developer: Quicksilver  
Publisher: Infogrames  
Due: April

The sequel to one of the best-loved strategy games of all time. Quicksilver has put a lot of effort into reducing the level of tedium that made MOO2 almost impossible to play as a multiplayer game. New AI 'leaders' can take off a lot of your workload when your empire grows too large. A new realtime combat system should also make multiplayer action much more fun. It works like old time naval combat with large ships being protected by smaller pickets and escorts. Looks like a winner.

# DOOM 3

Developer: idsoftware ■ Publisher: Activision ■ Available: Q3

## Carmack's a pig beast in the toilet!

**A**rguably THE most anticipated title of 2003, the new Doom has a lot of expectation and hopes built up around it, possibly too much to ever be able to live up to. There hasn't been a lot of information released about the game since E3 2002, and since that was nearly a year ago much has probably changed since then.

Bucking recent trends id's main focus with Doom III is apparently on creating a terrifying singleplayer experience. There will be a multiplayer side to the game of course, but the options may be somewhat limited according to John Carmack. All of the technology, from the new 5.1 surround-sound engine to the rag doll physics, has been put to the task of making a frightening game which is, strangely enough, more than a little reminiscent of the Resident Evil series from Capcom.

John Carmack has stated that he wants Doom 3 to push the fear factor over raw action. The monsters will be much more independently fearsome, rather than just acting as moving gun turrets so forget about the masses of 2D enemies that featured in Doom and Doom 2, Doom 3 will have its focus on smaller numbers of meaner monsters.

So far we know that Doom 3 will have upgrades of all your favourite Doom enemies. The imps

now do more than just snarl and hurl fireballs, they can also pounce on you. "Pinkie demons" (as id calls them) now feature mechanical rear legs, making their leaps all the more terrifying. The new hell knight is so big and fast that he can literally tear the player apart.

The Doom series was known for its technological excellence and the third installment of the game will push your PC as far as it can go. The big new feature on the graphics side is the complete unification of lighting, shadowing, and bump mapping across all the visual elements. In other words the moving animated elements are affected in the same way as the background elements making everything look more natural and part of the same whole.

Full dynamic 5.1 channel sound mixing and multichannel playback of studio sounds will add much to the atmosphere of the game. Doom 3 will make the most extensive use of surround sound yet seen in gaming (according to Carmack) and should please anyone who has made the investment in good audio for their PC.

Controversially Doom 3 will only have minimal multiplayer facilities when released, because of the focus on making it an outstanding singleplayer experience. This may disappoint many but with online titles becoming so advanced there simply isn't time to do an impressive job in both areas. However, knowing id's penchant for superb expandability, there will most likely be multiplayer add-on packs in the future to improve that side of the game.

We can see one down side to Doom 3 already however, the graphics engine might be gorgeous but it also needs a very powerful machine to run it so if this is on your wish list start saving now for that upgrade. Or indeed an entirely new machine.

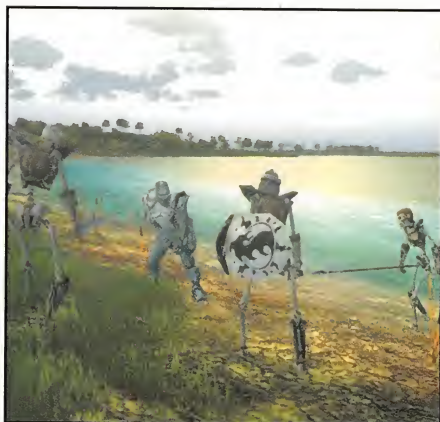




# DRAGON EMPIRES

Developer: Codemasters ■ Publisher: Infogrames ■ Available: Q4

My clan will whup your clan any day



**D**ragon Empires is Codemasters' first attempt at a MMORPG and it is looking sensational. What makes Dragon Empires different from other online roleplaying games? As different Dragon Empires clans get control of different cities they will change the town's economy to suit themselves. How long they stay in control will depend on how well they can defend their land and how much others want to take it off them. Some clans will be well liked and rule for a long period, others may be greedy for wealth and notoriety, possibly leading to short and bloody reigns. Dragon Empires also has a full and detailed crafting system which lets you make things even when you're offline and it also boasts one of the most beautiful worlds to ever grace a computer screen.

Perhaps the battle for cities won't interest you as much as combat itself. If this is the case you can head off into the wilderness to

hunt monsters, or even the outlaws who prey on traders and stragglers, or be an outlaw yourself.

The world of Dragon Empires is designed with a complex environment that dynamically responds to inputs of temperature, humidity and air pressure. The sun heats and evaporates the oceans causing clouds to form over land. Rain falls over the tropical forest and the changes in weather patterns are noticeable across the world! Steamy rainforests give way to arid deserts, to cool woodlands and frozen wastes. You can climb to the top of the nearest mountain and see the clouds form and drift with the breeze in the valley below. Or look out to sea and watch a storm front approach and change as it hits land. Not that you'd want to spend much time doing it but it's nice to know that you're a part of a real(ish) world.

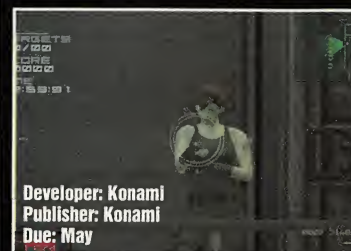
Not only is the world dynamic, it is alive. Seagulls flock around ports, butterflies drift over

meadows and the sounds of nature surround you. The creatures of the world won't wait dumbly for you to come and attack them, but act according to their own complex behavioral patterns. Creatures can migrate, hunt or run from players, or simply hide near their lairs waiting to surprise the unwary.

Crucial to the gameplay of Dragon Empires is trade between cities. Using a trading interface, players can examine where is best to sell available resources and then undertake a contract to move trade items between cities. Supply and demand will be in a constant state of flux as wars are waged and cities starved by sieges, outlaws or monsters.

Other players will want to avoid the hard slog of the road for the life of the craftsman. But instead of sitting for hours making same thing over and over, every player is able to own a workshop where automated devices turn raw resources into finished products for you to sell. Using a unique interface, players can set the items they want to purchase through the marketplace, in most cases these will be base resources, and then set what they want to manufacture. The finished goods can then be sold to players through the marketplace.

'Landed' clans enjoy being able to tax all the items bought and sold in a town, significantly enhancing their wealth. Of course, they better not make the taxes too painful or the townsfolk will be up in arms. Perhaps even contacting their non-town owning friends to encourage an uprising.



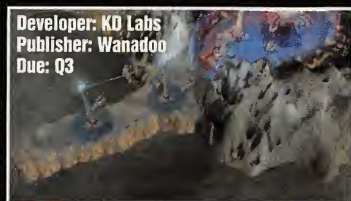
Developer: Konami  
Publisher: Konami  
Due: May

Benefiting also from five new 'Snake Tales' wherein Solid Snake (the game's main character) gets to play a series of all-new missions, while both Raiden and Snake are put through their paces in over 500 special purpose missions, designed to test their assorted stealth, combat and weapons handling skills. Originally a PS2 title it looks set to make the jump to PC successfully.



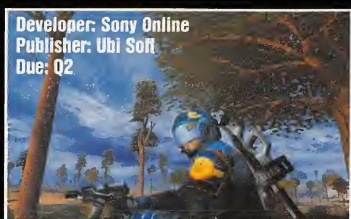
Developer: Rockstar  
Publisher: Take 2  
Due: Q3

Fast, edge of the seat driving on both two and four wheels. Set in LA, Paris and Tokyo with open plan courses. The first game that allows bikes to race four wheelers! There aren't many racers in development for the PC any more so this could be a rare treat for PC racing gamers. The game boasts advanced driver AI for your opponents but the really neat feature is the way the game implements street racing with traffic, pedestrians and all sorts of obstacles to get in your way.



Developer: KD Labs  
Publisher: Wanadoo  
Due: Q3

A RTS strategy built on the concept of non-stop terraforming. Real-time terraforming is influenced by special combat units, battle damage and natural geological processes. The gamer can encircle terraformed and captured zones with impenetrable force cupolas. Units can be transformed right on the battlefield thus giving the player powerful tactical opportunities to adapt combat units. This one could open up the RTS genre to some fresh ideas.



Developer: Sony Online  
Publisher: Ubi Soft  
Due: Q2

The world's first massively multiplayer FPS with a persistent world. Both team-minded players and solo operators are going to find this game fun. Planetside features a massive game world in which the player can fight as part of a clan for the greater good, or as a mercenary. Advancement is achieved through your exploits in combat with a planet wide tactical AI keeping tabs on what is happening across the entire world.

METAL GEAR SOLID 2

MIDNIGHT CLUB 2

PERIMETER

PLANETSIDE



# DREDD VS DEATH

Developer: Rebellion ■ Publisher: Vivendi ■ Available: Q4

We knew he was going to say that

**T**he concept may be a little obscure to some but every true fan of 2000AD comics has been salivating over this title since it was announced about 18 months ago. Judge Dredd is Mega City One's ultimate law enforcer. Police officer, jury, judge and executioner on the meanest streets the world has ever seen. Judge Death is his nemesis, a law enforcer gone bad, about as bad as you can get.

Although still in its early stages, this dark and bleak futuristic first person shooter based on the 2000AD license is a dark horse tip for 2003. Early screens show a lawless Mega City fraught with danger and some very nasty folk. Rebellion has a reputation for working and reworking ideas, no matter how long it takes, to ensure the end results are spot on and it looks as though their attention to detail is paying off with the creation of one of the most immersive environments in gaming history.

Stretching the length of the 22nd century American eastern seaboard, Mega-City One is the most dangerous city on earth. So dangerous, it demands a special breed of law enforcer. Here there are no police, no trials and no juries, only the Judges. It takes fifteen years to train a Judge for life on the streets of Mega-City One. Fifteen years of iron discipline, rigid self-control and

concentrated aggression. Most feared and respected of all Judges is Joe Dredd, a man vested with the power of instant sentencing, a man whose courts are the streets and whose word is the Law!

Based on an original storyline approved by 2000AD guru John Wagner himself, the game will lead players over a two-day journey as Dredd discovers a trail of clues leading him to his arch enemy, Judge Death. Beginning with a fight against traditional stand-by bad dude Mean Machine, Dredd is distracted by a theft of blood from a blood bank. Following the trail of clues leads to the revelation of a hidden cartel of death cultists deep within Mega City One, and the story unfolds from there. It will be told in defined chapters, hopefully re-creating a comic book feel to the story.

The Dredd vs Death team has FPS experience from Aliens versus Predator and the Delta Force games and Dredd vs Death itself has been built using their in-house Asura Engine. The graphics engine includes some very hip 'ragdoll' physics built into bodies, allowing them to slump and fall far more realistically than they otherwise would. It also looks rather good and apparently has a knack for rendering the large complex environments that will form the mainstay of the game's maps.



POSTAL 2

REPUBLIC: THE REVOLUTION

RISE OF NATIONS

RTX RED ROCK



Developer: Running With Scissors  
Publisher: SCI  
Due: Q3

Distinguished by the amount of gruesome detail, basically this game is bad taste behaviour in electronic form. Every politically incorrect thing you can think of is right here. It's cringe-worthy and like the original title it has already caused controversy in some countries for allowing players to go 'poofta bashing'. It remains to be seen if this game is good enough to justify being of such questionable quality and taste.



Developer: Elixir  
Publisher: Eidos  
Due: Q2

Peter Molynux's own apprentice heads this project, a mix of cerebral ideas and innovative game design elements. Set in an Eastern block community The Revolution puts you in the thick of all the political, religious and military intrigue of an iron curtain city. Little is known about how the game will work but it promises a lot for gamers looking for new horizons to conquer. We expected it in 2002, but now we have to wait, wait and wait some more.



Developer: Big Huge Games  
Publisher: Microsoft Games  
Due: Q2

In Rise of Nations you'll create new cities, improve city infrastructures and expand national borders. Conquer foes through military might using everything from sling shots to cannons to stealth bombers to nuclear weapons spanning 6000 years of civilisation; corner the market on key commodities and consolidate power under your rule; wheel and deal across time with history's eminent cultures. Think Civilisation in complete 3D.



Developer: Lucas Arts  
Publisher: Lucas Arts  
Due: Q2

It's 2103 A.D and you play as E.Z. Wheeler, a biomechanically enhanced soldier built to wage a one-man war. You have an arsenal built into your steel arm, an electronic eye and a robotic sidekick named IRIS. Alien invaders have overrun the colony on Mars and you're being sent to stop them and you will be able to control other biomechanical devices such as robots and vehicles. Red Rock is aimed at younger gamers who want more than kids games but who aren't quite old enough to cope with complex strategy.



# ENTER THE MATRIX

Developer: Shiny ■ Publisher: Infogrames ■ Available: May 15th

Kick them in the eye!



**T**o create Enter the Matrix, Shiny Entertainment has built up a unique relationship with The Matrix filmmakers Larry and Andy Wachowski. This isn't just a game based on a movie, Enter the Matrix is an integral part of the entire Matrix storyline. If you don't play the game, you're not seeing the entire Matrix story!

The Wachowskis wrote the game's story and script, breaking new ground in how Hollywood works with game developers. They collaborated on all game design elements and outlined all of the action moments in the game in true Matrix style, as well as personally directing new, never-before-seen 35mm film footage for the game, featuring the same actors, sets, costumes and effects used in The Matrix: Reloaded.

The game will feature an unprecedented amount of motion capture material. About 1,000 martial arts moves all directed by Yuen Wo-Ping, the acclaimed Hong Kong director who choreographed all the fight scenes for all of The Matrix films, as well as "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon", "Charlie's Angels" and numerous other film projects.

One of the cool things about this game is the events in the game and The Matrix: Reloaded film take place in the same universe at roughly the

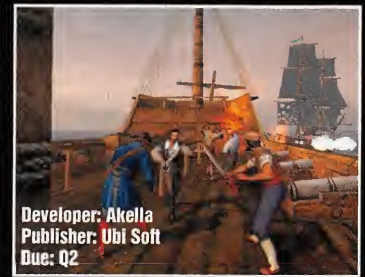


same time. A character may walk out of a scene in the film, only to walk into a scene in the game!

Both stories stand alone, however if you have also played the game you'll get the story-within-the-story of the movie, and see why certain events in the film happen the way that they do. In other words you have to play the game to get the entire Matrix Reloaded story. This storytelling device is unique in that the game, being a longer experience than the film, can explore the world of The Matrix in much greater depth. You'll experience the film, but you will interact with the Matrix in the game.

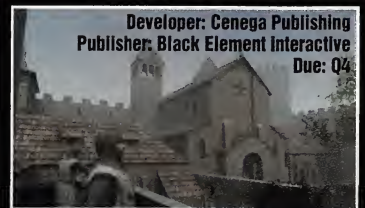
The game places you in the role of either Niobe or Ghost, part of the same group of rebels as Morpheus, Trinity and Neo. Niobe is the Captain of the Logos, the fastest ship in the rebel fleet. Ghost is the ship's weapons guru. The game also features a unique "hacking" system that allows the player to hack into the game, or his/her character, exploring and unlocking secrets. And of course guns. Lots of guns.

Gamers can apparently expect around 10-50 hours of gameplay, depending on your playing style and skill. In addition, there is over one hour of exclusive movie footage and two hours of in-game movies.



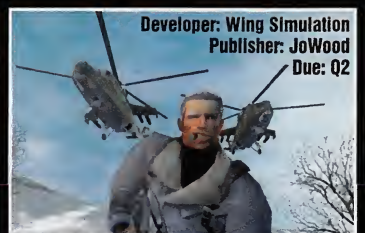
Developer: Akella  
Publisher: Ubi Soft  
Due: Q2

Action and intrigue on the high seas in this colourful new RPG from Russian developers Akella. This sequel offers the ability for the player to leave his ship and land lub around various ports and townships to meet disreputable characters and goose a few wenches. (Goose? - Ed)



Developer: Cenega Publishing  
Publisher: Black Element Interactive  
Due: Q4

Cenega/Black Element could make it big with this highly polished third person horror shooter. You control what appears to be a normal human who is host to some kind of demonic force. Your character can summon this demon within him to assist with certain tasks throughout his adventure, but not without some cost to himself. The game looks spectacular and uses a custom built graphics engine.



Developer: Wing Simulation  
Publisher: JoWood  
Due: Q2

Online tactical FPS with a focus on realism. Play as Solder, a soldier for hire with a massive array of customisable gadgets and a team of specialists under your control. The game includes a dynamic political system, a mass of weapons and vehicles and a spiffy advanced destruction system for determining what happens on the battlefield. Solder - Secret Wars is one to watch if you're a Counter-Strike fan.



Developer: Mayhem Studios  
Publisher: Infogrames  
Due: Q4

Do crazy stuff in a variety of vehicles! With focus on physics and top notch AI, this is a very interesting arcade game in the making from the Slovak team. Based on the ancient title 'Stunts' Final Stage boasts a cutting edge graphics engine, and the ability for players to customise practically everything in the game.

SEA DOGS 2  
SHADE: WRATH OF ANGELS

SOLDER

STUNTS: FINAL STAGE





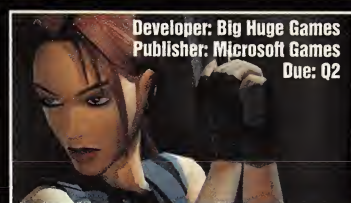
Developer: Pivotal Games  
Publisher: SCI  
Due: Q4

Can the game come anywhere close to the classic film? The action has been designed to mirror the best sequences from the film as you take turns controlling the main cast members. Of course Steve McQueen's bike mounted chase scene over the fields and hills of southern Germany is included in the game's 21 levels, along with many others.



Developer: Lionhead  
Publisher: Infogrames  
Due: Q4

Essentially this is a Motion Picture Studio simulator where you can create your own films! But before you can get the end product you have to build your own sets, get a script writer, hire and fire actors, find a director, promote the film and make loads of money - all on a very tiny budget. You take on the role of the head of a movie studio in the 1920s. Can you figure out what sorts of pictures the public wants to see? The Movies looks like it has the right stuff.



Developer: Big Huge Games  
Publisher: Microsoft Games  
Due: Q2

More Lara, more pony tails and more unfriendly animals. Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness is about going to Paris to help a friend which soon turns into a lot more than was initially observed. This time around Lara has some RPG like elements that help her improve her abilities as you solve puzzles and complete quests. And, yes Lara can talk to people in this instalment, giving it an even more RPG like feel. Want more? Check out our feature preview on page 40.



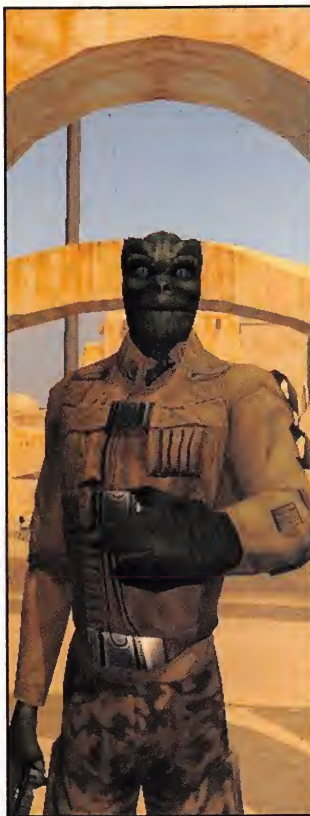
Developer: Frog City  
Publisher: Take2  
Due: April

The not so subtle differences between Tropic 1 and Tropic 2 lie in the fact that the player no longer maintains their wealth by the production of goods and development of resources, but by plundering merchants on the high seas and bringing the victims back to the island as captive workers. In addition, the pirate characters show a great deal of individual personality making them more a part of the game than the faceless islanders of old.

# STAR WARS: GALAXIES

Developer: Lucas Arts/SOE ■ Publisher: SOE ■ Available: Q4

You rez my Wookiee, I'll buff your Jawa



**G**alaxies offers something millions of people the world over have fantasised about doing for twenty five years, being a part of the Star Wars universe.

Star Wars Galaxies starts out with the usual character set up routine, with currently eight species for a player to pick from. There is a difference in the Star Wars universe between a "species" and a "race." The term "species" is used when discussing Star Wars sentient aliens such as Wookiees, Trandoshans, Twi'leks, and Rodians. Within a species, however, there may be a great deal of variation; extreme "variants" are known as "races." Race won't affect attributes, skills, or other game mechanics.

There won't be any levels in Star Wars Galaxies. Instead, your character's development is much more flexible, being built around a skill-based system in which the skills you possess largely define your character's abilities and strengths. Your character's profession is a collection of his or her skills that represent a particular role or activity. Each profession begins with a few basic skills and then develops into more specialised areas as you gain experience.

Acquiring these skills won't simply be a matter of buying the ones you're after with the skill points you have available. Instead access to most skills is locked until you've fulfilled certain prerequisites. You might for example be required to complete a specific mission or quest, gain experience with another related skill or achieve a certain status or rank.

Each time you add a new profession, the skill point cost for gaining new skills will increase. The higher-tier skills will be more expensive to buy, in both skill points and credits; they will also have more rigorous prerequisites. Every character also has a maximum learning capacity (pool of skill points) so no character will be able to master every skill at the same time.

Galaxies will also feature a battlefield concept where factions of players can square off against each other, with user-positioned turrets and minefields adding to the fun. The game will boast over 180 unique creatures and nine world environments taken from the films, a player run economy and many, many more interesting features. This is set to be huge.





# STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC

Developer: Bioware ■ Publisher: Lucas Arts ■ Available: Q4

An even longer time ago in a galaxy slightly closer

**O**nline gamers aren't the only ones looking forward to more Star Wars gaming goodness as highly regarded RPG developers Bioware take the Star Wars license into more uncharted territory.

Four thousand years before the rise of the Galactic Empire the Republic was at its most vulnerable. Sensing this weakness, a warlike species called the Mandalorians began a series of attacks against worlds throughout the Outer Rim. The Republic of course turned to the Jedi Council for aid. With two young Jedi, Revan and Malak at the head the Republic set off to drive the invaders back. The Mandalorian Wars were long and bloody, but the Republic emerged triumphant, and Revan and Malak were hailed as heroes.

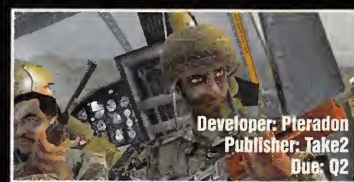
However on the world of

Korriban, Revan uncovered the lost secrets of the Sith and became the heir to an ancient and evil legacy. Succumbing to the lure of the dark side, the fallen Jedi assumed the title of Darth Revan, Lord of the Sith. With their army of followers, Revan and Malak returned not as saviors, but as conquerors. The Sith gained victory after victory, until the Jedi set a trap for Revan, but during the chaos of battle Malak managed to escape and seize the mantle of his fallen Sith Master, proclaiming himself the new Dark Lord and swearing revenge on those who had killed Revan.

Knights takes players way, way back to this period, long before the Galactic Civil War, over 4,000 years before the first Star Wars film and when both the Jedi and Sith number

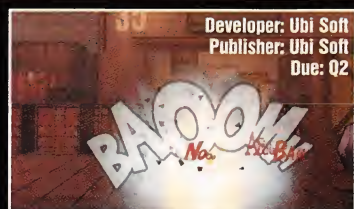
in the thousands. With the Galaxy reeling from the recent conflict with the Dark Lords, the ongoing battle between the Jedi and the Sith rages on. Your actions will determine the outcome of this colossal war, and your destiny as a Jedi.

Knights promises to be the most detailed and immersive 3D RPG to date, and a setting that reeks of intrigue and adventure. Your character is one of a party of up to three members that can include humans, droids, wookies and several other races. Your journey will span ten different worlds ranging from the familiar to the new, including Tatooine, the Sith world of Korriban, the Jedi Academy on Dantooine and the Wookiee homeworld of Kashyyyk (yes, with a triple-y).



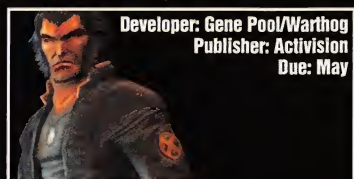
Developer: Pterodon  
Publisher: Take2  
Due: Q2

Special Forces and regular troops build an A-camp in Pleiku province near the Cambodian border. During the course of their six-month tour of duty, your team will carry out various manoeuvres within the camp's vicinity, exploring the surrounds and conducting battle actions against the Vietcong. This game veritably drips with atmosphere, of jungle heat and tension. It's about time a decent Vietnam War game turned up, and this seems like it.



Developer: Ubi Soft  
Publisher: Ubi Soft  
Due: Q2

XIII is a cel-shaded FPS built with the next-generation Unreal 2 engine and based on the French comic series of the same name. Cel-shading has previously been used to good effect in games such as Jet Set Radio and Auto Modellista but not within the FPS genre. Like many titles these days XIII is being developed for all platforms, the PC version will support up to 32 player online play and include a map editor with the game.



Developer: Gene Pool/Warhog  
Publisher: Activision  
Due: May

Wolverine has 48 hours to find a cure for a deadly virus and there's an army of bad guys in his way. X-MEN2 features the voices of Mark Hamill and Patrick Stewart (as Xavier) to provide some atmosphere and its storyline was written by Larry Hama, one of the X-MEN's original story writers. Gameplay involves using a lot of stealth moves to sneak into locations and wild combat manoeuvres to take out the bad guys when you find them. One to look out for if you're an X-MEN fan.



Developer: THQ  
Publisher: THQ  
Due: Q4

A 3D action, genre-busting game that includes adventure elements, air combat and a gripping campaign. You assume control of a young fighter pilot called Magnus Tide who controls a large mecha-like starfighter on a world set at the end of the 21st century. The game is mission based but allows plenty of interaction between missions as the storyline unfolds and your character develops. The graphics are exceptional and the flight AI quite challenging.

VIETCONG

XIII

X-MEN2

YAGER



It's been a long road from Space Invaders to Splinter Cell. Jere Lawrence takes a nostalgic look at the key developments in gaming hardware.

# ON THE ORIGIN OF GAMING

## PONG

From little things big things grow

The world of gaming moves fast. I'm only a sprightly lad of barely 30 summers, but in the gaming timeline, I'm a crusty old codger with false teeth, a walking stick, and a whole bunch of really weird ideas about what gaming should be.

For you see, I'm old enough to remember how it all began. The origins of videogaming. Every console, every major hardware development, I was either playing it or had my face pressed up against the shop window wishing it could be mine. From Colecovision to the Atari ST, from NES to SNES, from 68080 to 386 SX, I was there.

Because the evolution of gaming has been such a big part of my life, I fell to thinking about which of all the hundreds of techno gadgets were the most influential in creating the state of gaming today. And after a time, or a few times anyway, I came up with the following list. So follow me back down the path of my own whimsical memory as we investigate the origins of gaming.

If there was ever a lesson to learn from the vast numbers of exploited inventors across time it would be that if you have built something, no matter how insignificant you think it is, patent it, register it, copyright it. Do whatever it takes to legally make it yours.

In 1958 physicist Willy Higinbotham noticed that visitors to Brookhaven's National Laboratories were bored. He decided to invent an interactive table-tennis like game that displayed on an oscilloscope. A year later he even improved the game dramatically by displaying it on a 15-inch monitor but believing he hadn't invented anything significant, didn't patent the device.

Thirteen years later, with the help of Ted Dabney, Nolan Bushnell started the videogame company that everyone seems to know: ATARI! Bushnell hired Al Alcorn but since he was inexperienced told him to program a simple tennis game. The result

was the game known as Pong, named so because "pong" was the sound the ball made when hitting the bat and also because the name "ping pong" was already taken.

Once again though corporate ignorance almost saw the demise of something special. After Bally Midway passed on Pong, Bushnell, never the one to give up, set up the Pong machine in a local bar called Andy Capps but within two weeks the test unit broke down. Why? The reason was simple; the coin box was flooded with quarters. Pong was on its way to massive success.





# SPACE INVADERS

When the Franklin Mint had to print more money

Perhaps one of the more amusing myths in computer gaming lore was that Mr Nishikado, the programmer of Space Invaders from video gaming giant Taito, thought up the classic shooter after he had a dream where a number of Japanese school children scanned the skies for Santa, but instead saw row upon row of aliens advancing slowly from Venus. The children quickly built a laser from the hub caps, spark plugs and battery of a parked car to repel the invading horde. On waking, Nishikado immediately committed this vision to paper, and later to code, and the game we've surely all played was born.

Nope, the above paragraph is not true at all, but was made up by the once proud magazine "Your Sinclair" in 1991 as a joke. The true inspiration for Space Invaders may, sadly, never be known.

Although simple by today's standards, Space Invaders had the player shooting rows of aliens that moved from left to right across the screen returning fire. Offering limited safety, four 'shields' at the bottom of the screen but above your 'tank' allowed for duck and cover style play. As you destroyed the aliens they started moving faster making the game more challenging. However, this added

challenge was not due to a 'speed up' instruction in the game's code, but instead was due to the fact that programming techniques for timing frames to raster refreshes hadn't been developed yet. As the number of sprites on the screen diminished, the central controller of the game was able to update the graphics faster. Therefore, faster aliens. Perhaps this is one of the first 'bugs' to be instead adopted as a feature, like skiing down hills in Tribes 2.

Why is Space Invaders considered influential hardware? Well, it was the first ever video game to make \$500 million in revenue. The game was also so amazingly popular in Japan that there was a coin shortage until the country's 100-Yen coin supply was quadrupled. Another less than desirable consequence was that youth crime also escalated as grocery stores were robbed of small change just so the perpetrators could pump it back into Space Invaders

## ATARI 2600

When too much fake wood veneer was barely enough

More pedantic historians or purists could indeed gripe at the fact that the 2600 wasn't the first home console system. But this article is about influential hardware and although the Magnavox Odyssey was one of the first consoles available for the home it wasn't really very influential, mostly because hardly anyone bought it. Mass acceptance of video games didn't occur until a certain sexy, wood panelled, bringer of joy was to grace the market, the Atari 2600.

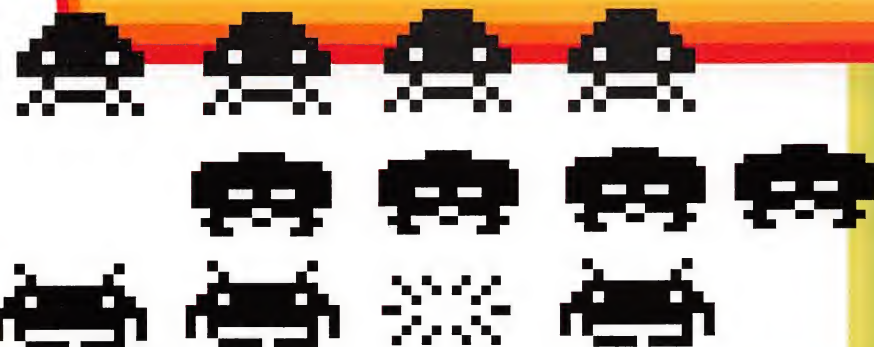
The whole principle behind the Atari 2600 was to take video games to the next level. Previously, Atari had manufactured consoles that only played one game and these included: Pong, Super Pong, Stunt Cycle and Video Pinball. The problem to these consoles was that consumers quickly tired of the game and wanted more.

In answer, the Atari 2600 Video Computer System was born. With late 70s/early 80s flare the 2600 had a unique look, including a faux wood-grain finish that conveniently matched TVs of the time.

The 2600 was an extremely well engineered system, reflecting Atari's determination to give their customers what they'd been demanding for the last few years - flexibility. Decked out with a number of ground-breaking options, the 2600 came with two joysticks, two paddle controllers, a switch for black and white/colour TVs and most ingeniously, difficulty switches for the left and right player so that more experienced gamers could be handicapped against their less-capable opponents.

Since video gaming was such a new and emerging market, Atari did not envisage massive sales of the 2600, but a certain game conversion would change all that. Acquiring the first ever license to make Space Invaders for the home, Atari soared to new heights as consumers couldn't get enough invader-blasting action. Atari sensibly leapt on this unexpected market for arcade conversions and went on to convert such classics as Missile Command, Asteroids and Defender. This new-found success for the console also led to the forming of third-party development houses. Indeed, one of the original Atari third-party developers is still operating today, it's a little company called Activision, and it publishes such games as Return to Castle

Wolfenstein and the upcoming Doom 3. Meanwhile, Atari never expected more than 10 games to be developed for the unit but at last unconfirmed count, including third party development, over 529 titles were made.





# THE JOYSTICK

Unless you have six busted ones in the cupboard, you aint no gamer

The joystick was a mainstay of early computer gaming and indeed was once the only available input device. Simple but effective, the early joysticks were entirely digital, a contrast to modern analogue joysticks that track movement based on how far the stick is away from the centre point - a short distance equals slow movement and a greater distance from centre equals faster movement. But the first joysticks weren't like this at all and just simply read the direction the stick was moved based on two pieces of metal completing a circuit.

The first commercially available joystick, the Atari CX-40 (made for the 2600 but also compatible with Atari and Commodore computers) was actually a cruel mistress. I remember these joysticks well but it was no love affair - these little demons could inflict serious pain. The joystick had a major design fault and although the stick could be held comfortably, the angle you had to contort your thumb to press the fire button was quite painful after only a few minutes. Contrast this to the RSI-safe, ergonomically designed Force Feedback joysticks of today and you can see that development has improved dramatically. See, back in the good old days, we were prepared to SUFFER for our gaming.

The influence of the joystick on gaming cannot be underestimated. The ability to move in eight different directions meant that the developers could start thinking beyond games where you only moved left or right (Space Invaders) or up and down (Pong). This new found freedom led to the first action adventure game, Swordquest, written by master 2600 programmer Todd Fry. As an aside, Fry was the developer famous for accepting a \$1 million cheque to do a Pacman conversion for the 2600. Claiming he 'hated the game' he did the sloppiest, quickest and dirtiest job ever, producing a crappy product in record time. As legend has it, he then further endeared himself to his corporate betters by photocopying his \$1 million cheque and pasting it on his office door for all to see. The motivation for doing this? Thankfully, this is lost in the mists of time.



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**THE 2600 REMOTE CONTROL WIRELESS JOYSTICK**

- Eliminates wires for convenient and exciting game play
- Rugged design with the familiar Atari joystick
- Available in February - order now!



## THE ORIGINS OF SONY

Originally called the Tokyo Telecommunications Engineering Company, after witnessing an American-made tape recorder, Akio Morita (one of the original founders) decided it was the direction he wanted his country to go. In 1952, Morita and his partner Ibuka only just managed to raise the \$25,000 fee to license brand new technology from Bell Labs called "the transistor". They then use their newly acquired rights to invent the world's first "transistor radio". A massive success in Japan, Ibuka and Morita look to market their products to the US and Europe but realise their name is too cumbersome in English. After modifying the Latin word sonus (sound) they manage to come up with a name that is still known around the world today - Sony.



## THE MOTOROLA 6502

The little central processing unit that could

The early eighties saw the arrival of three different series of computer systems that all had something in common. Each in their own way contributed to the success of video games. These computers were the Atari 400/800/XL/XE, Apple I/II and the Commodore 64 (and its variants). Although the C64 actually had a Motorola 6510 CPU inside, it was completely compatible with the 6502. This was certainly the little chip that could and even though the graphical processors of each system were different it was primarily this CPU that powered the most popular games of the era.

Although commercial games were plentiful there were two other aspects to these micro computers that were thoroughly influential. The first is that these systems were programmable and anyone with the patience could attempt to write the next big hit. And in fact, many did. These were the days of garage development when the budget of a game wasn't measured in the millions, but rather how many pizzas it would take until the project was finished.

Games back then didn't necessarily come in a conveniently shrink-wrapped

box. There was another means of acquiring new games; type 'em in yourself.

Computer magazines within this era (1980-1983) would often print program listings of games written in BASIC so that readers could manually enter it in at home. The process was cumbersome but at the same time very rewarding as it was possible to learn how games worked.

Another factor that assured the 6502, or more accurately, the computers it powered had a place in history would have to be the 5.25" floppy drive. Although magnetic disk mediums had been around for a long time, the disk drive which could store a lot more information than what could be held in memory gave rise to the birth of the multi-disk game. Games suddenly became larger, more complex and were more visually impressive because graphics and other large files could be brought in and out of memory simply, text adventures suddenly became graphical adventures and classics like Maniac Mansion which relied on numerous disk accesses were born. More than influential, entire genres were invented on these systems.





## WHERE DO THEY GET THESE NAMES FROM?

Irony, Irony everywhere but not a drop to drink? Ha! Not in the games biz. Atari was a very American company with a very Japanese name but was so named because of Bushnell's fascination with the ancient Japanese game of strategy, Go. Atari, besides the name of the greatest video game company to ever exist is also the equivalent Japanese term in Go for "Check". Bushnell chose the name because the principles of Go, that of balancing aggression and caution, influence and restraint, friendliness and disharmony. The name of Bushnell's second company however was Tengen which requires a little explaining. The Japanese describe the Go board as the universe and the central point of creation, of all things, is called the *tengen*. On the other hand, Sega, a Japanese company was started in 1955 by an American serviceman by the name of David Rosen. After purchasing a Japanese jukebox company, David used the first two letters of "servicemen games" to create the Japanese sounding word, Sega.



# NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

In an age when an Italo-Japanese plumber conquered the world

Between 1982 and 1984 a slump in video console and game sales had bean-counters declaring the great videogame crash. Although, given the small size of the industry, it was a little melodramatic to refer to it as a crash, the "golden days" of sales exceeding expectations were over. Best typifying this crisis is the story of ET: The Extra Terrestrial for Atari 2600. Ignorant marketing types assumed videogames could be promoted like action figures: the more you make, the more you sell. Unfortunately, they actually made more ET cartridges than there were Atari 2600 consoles on the market. As a result, we are left with the image of the Great Crisis: a fleet of yellow bulldozers ploughing hundreds of thousands of ET carts into a New Mexico landfill.

It was just after this time that Nintendo, a trading-card company, decided to go hard (or presumably go home) on its new videogames system which it called the Famicom. Rebadging it as the Nintendo Entertainment System, the company pushed it hard in the West. Retailers concerned about lack-lustre videogame sales eyed the new Nintendo gaming system cautiously but remained sceptical and insisted that Nintendo agree to buy back all unpurchased inventory.

Meeting good success with a limited market release of the NES in New York, Nintendo decided to take the system to the American people. The unit shipped with an arcade conversion of Super Mario Brothers and became an instant hit as hundreds of thousands and eventually millions of

households flocked to purchase the new console.

Highly influential, Nintendo not only managed to successfully reignite the faltering videogame market, it also managed to keep that success with the Super NES (SNES). At one stage in the eighties the world went Mario crazy and was subjected to novelties such as Nintendo/Mario cereal, stickers, lunch boxes, school bags and other such things. Like a Hollywood star or a blockbuster movie, Nintendo was given the entire plastic treatment.



## MOTOROLA 6800

Spawning point of a new era

In the earlier days of computing Intel wasn't at all making the kinds of leaps of technology of other CPU manufacturers. Although Intel's XT chips slowly got faster (from 1MHz to 10MHz) Motorola was moving into areas of 16-bit processing and RISC (Reduced Instruction Set Computer) technology which used less power and less heat than Intel CISC (Complex Instruction Set Computer) processors, which are still CISC today.

The major companies who used the 68000 chip to build a computer were once again Atari, Apple and Commodore. The machines to feature the 68000 were the Atari ST, Apple Macintosh and Commodore Amiga.

Sporting an incredible 520K of memory and either a 360 or 720K 3.5" floppy disk drive the Commodore and Atari computers were to lead the way in next-generation gaming. Apple, which previously had a plethora of games available for the II/Ile platform was moving in a more business-focused direction and development dried up. But on the Atari and Amiga gaming thrived.

In regard to influence, the Atari and Commodore 16 bit computers did go in different directions. As an Atari devotee I never wanted to admit it at the time, the Amiga was a better computer and in terms of graphics and sound represented the most advanced microcomputer of the era.

The Atari ST was certainly no slouch in the graphics department but where it could only display a maximum of 16 colours from a palette of 512, the Amiga could use 32 colours from a palette of 4096. Worse for Atari was that its ability to display more colours using rastering techniques (a maximum of 512 from 512) used huge amounts of processor power and subsequently was useless for games. The Amiga however had specialised "HAM" (Hold and Modify) hardware that allowed it to use 4096 from 4096 colours with only very small overhead.

Where the Atari had the advantage though was in regard to music. With two built-in MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) ports to allow it to receive and send data to professional synthesizers and the best Notation software of the time (Cubase, Notator) the Atari ST was picked up by professional musicians and studios all over the world. Suddenly the ST was one of the most advanced sequencers available and musicians started to experiment with a new style of synthesizer-based, computerised music that would later be called Techno.

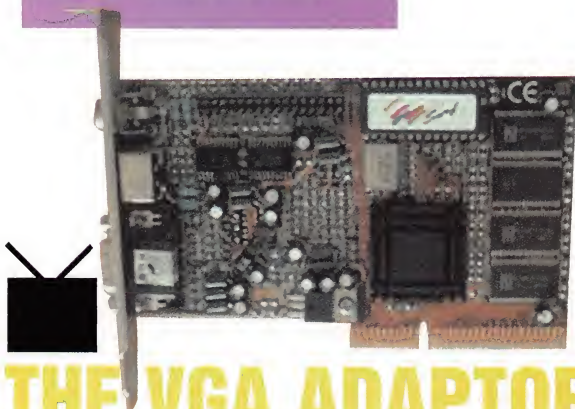
The Amiga on the other hand was responsible for bringing some amazing high colour, digital sound enhanced games to fruition such as Shadow of the Beast and Blood Money. Actually, the Amiga with its numerous custom chips to compute scrolling, digital sound and specialised graphics modes (HAM) closely resembles the PC of today with their sound cards and 3D accelerators.





## EIGHTIES EQUALS INNOVATION

It is so very refreshing to be reminded that at one stage in recent human history that there was a very real desire to innovate. These days it's all about committees, standardisation and corporate "enemies" coming together to create unified, compatible interfaces such as USB and IEEE1394 (Firewire). But in the early days of micro-computing, technology companies pumped millions of dollars into R&D in an effort to actually develop radical technology. One such device was the Atari Mindlink system. This was a combination of headband with an infrared transmitter and receiver that was designed to read resistance in muscles in the user's forehead and interpret them into commands on the screen. The device however was never released because test-cases reported headaches from over concentration and constantly moving their eyebrows to control the onscreen activities.



## THE VGA ADAPTOR

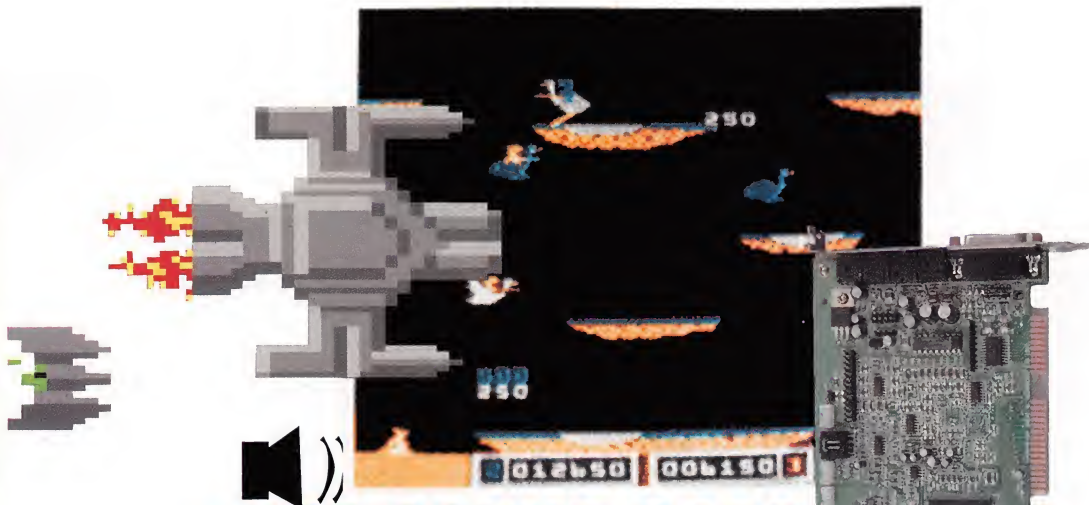
Because after all, graphics maketh the game

Although the HAM mode for the Amiga with its 4096 colours sounded great, the reality was that an interlacing technique was used to achieve this and the result was an image that flickered and was hard on the eyes. Subsequently the majority of Amiga games (95%) used the standard 320x200 32 colour graphics mode.

Gaming however was about to make a dramatic shift and the real rise of the IBM compatible PC as a home computer was beginning. Primarily it all centred around one new device, the VGA (Video Graphics Array) card. Allowing a resolution for gaming of 320x200 with

256 colours from a palette of 4096, the PC started to produce games that had a graphical richness far superior to that of the Amiga and the Atari ST.

Games such as M1 Tank Platoon and later, Wing Commander showed that the PC of the late 80s and early 90s had quickly caught up and then surpassed the video abilities of the competition. But it would take one final device to make the PC a complete multimedia system capable of bettering the Amiga - a soundcard.



## THE SOUND CARD

Adlib and Soundblaster and more!

The first sound card to be developed for the PC was the Adlib by the company of the same name. Although not a particularly advanced sound card the Adlib became very popular because finally something was available that outputted sound from somewhere other than the hopeless PC speaker. The Adlib however wasn't really advanced enough and only able to play frequency-modulated MIDI music. The card had no ability to record or playback sampled sound. The Amiga was still ahead of the PC, at least in terms of playback.

That was until Mr Sim Wong Hoo, now CEO of Creative Labs, invented the SoundBlaster. This was the first all encompassing sound card for the PC and coupled with VGA graphics made for the most powerful gaming platform on the market. What made the SoundBlaster so

appealing was its ability to "do it all". As the Adlib was a MIDI device that received its sound information as the notes of the music, the SoundBlaster with its own MIDI chip could immediately offer Adlib compatibility but it was the digital wave component of the card that made all the difference. With this ability, gamers could now hear explosions, sampled sound effects and most importantly speech in their games just like Amiga users; and developers loved it.

Developers were literally falling over themselves to add SoundBlaster support to their product as quickly as possible and PC gamers all over the globe made up for years of PC speaker suffrage by snapping up sound cards like there was no tomorrow. Sadly, developers tried to capitalise on this new found love for sampled sound by releasing "speech packs" for games that were almost half the price of the original. Love to see them try and do that these days.





# SONY PLAYSTATION

Smack the lion in the mouth and verily  
he shall bite you on the arse



Early 1992. After the release of Sega's 32 bit console Nintendo found itself faltering as it had no product in development that could compete with the advanced capabilities of Sega's Megadrive. To rectify this Nintendo approached Sony to assist with a CD device for the SNES. After completing the prototype, Sony indicated that it wanted a cut of the profits from CD-based games. Nintendo in its usual greedy way refused to enter into any profit-sharing agreement (instead preferring to pay Sony a lump-sum for development), ditched Sony altogether and instead commissioned Phillips to create an add-on

CD drive that was also compatible with the much maligned CD-i.

Now for the good bit. Sony, disgusted by Nintendo's attitude (not the only large company to feel the same way) began work to refine the peripheral CD drive into a 32-bit CD-only game machine to unseat Nintendo in both Japan and the US. That unit was unveiled as the Sony PlayStation and went on to be the highest selling console of all time. The moral of the story? When dealing with a massive, determined corporate powerhouse with nearly fifty years experience in electronics, you damn well give them a profit-share.

Although the PlayStation's R3000 RISC processor which ran at 33MHz was on par with PC CPUs, it was the custom 3D-

renderer, designed by Ken Kutaragi that gave the PlayStation its teeth. This adoption of

hardware 3D rendering took gaming away from flat, sprite-driven environments into lush 3D worlds and games like Wipeout stunned gamers with its incredibly fast, high colour graphics.

Sure it had great graphics, but is it fair to say the PlayStation was hugely influential? Well, the unit was responsible for Sony's highest profits ever and is considered by them to be the most important product since the Walkman. The PS1 was also responsible for almost destroying Nintendo, whose cartridge-based Nintendo 64 could not effectively compete with the high storage capacity (ideal for full motion video) and cheap manufacturing costs of a PS1 CD. In fact, so influential was the Playstation that it was also responsible for capturing the attention of Microsoft which now sees video games as a mainstream source of profit and made the Xbox to directly compete with Sony's PlayStation2.

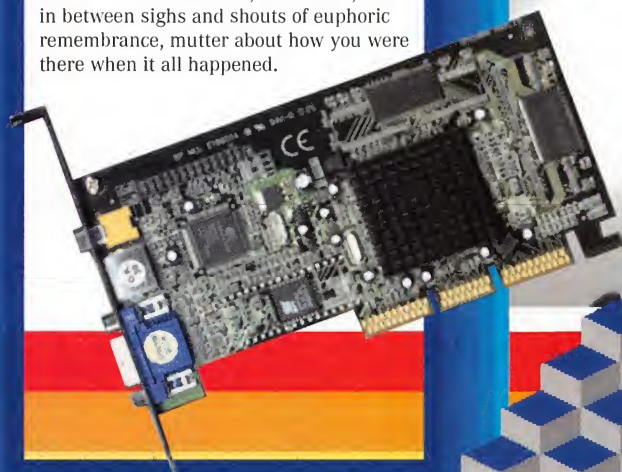
## THE 3D ACCELERATOR

When voodoo magic made PC king

The most recent and influential piece of hardware in regard to gaming is still new enough that we're in the middle of the evolution, or revolution even. The 3D accelerator changed the nature of gaming and took us from ugly, low res, jagged pixel hell into gloriously high resolution, high colour, fast frame rate gaming glory.

As for being influential, well, the current 3D accelerator market is a multi-billion dollar industry that has seen the rise and fall of the likes of 3Dfx and now it's NVIDIA that holds the lead. The technology is also continuing to improve at a phenomenal rate. Higher resolutions, faster processing and rendering speeds measured in the millions of polygons per second confirm that these incredible devices are not only furthering computing, but are even now influencing the entire market and games we play now.

So there you go, safe in the knowledge that you are witnessing a piece of hardware as, or even possibly more influential than the sound card, you too will be able to look back, like I have, and in between sighs and shouts of euphoric remembrance, mutter about how you were there when it all happened.



### HONOURABLE MENTIONS

**Dragon's Lair:** The Donald Bluth classic that had Dirk the daring attempt to rescue sexy Princess Daphne in all her Laser disk glory. Using a massive number of tracks on the Laserdisc a correct push of the joystick led to success while an incorrect decision led to death.

**Hard Disk:** Although Hard Disks were available in the very first IBM XTs (actually, there was even a Baby 38 with a HDD) these devices have had a major influence on video games. Particularly in modern times where Hard Disks have allowed for the fast retrieval of data within large complex files (such as .WAD) to create a fluidly large environment.

**Modem:** Modem, Cable modems and ADSL modems allow us average to high speed connectivity to the Internet. Influential? Certainly, just look at online gaming. On the bleah side of success we have Everquest but another notable mention should go to Quake III for its early adoption of online support.

**Mouse:** And we thought it was only useful for Windows. One acronym sums up the Influence of the mouse. FPS.



# Virtual Skipper 2

**ALL ABOARD FOR THE BEST SAILING-GAME EXPERIENCE EVER!**

## All aboard for the best sailing-game experience ever!

Virtual Skipper 2 is the ultimate 3D regatta simulation. You'll take the helm of some of the sport's most famous boats, such as the DEFI AREVA, which is representing France in the America's Cup™; the Open 60, the "Formula 1" racer of the seas; the Offshore Racer; and the Melges 24™. With Virtual Skipper 2 you'll race on best courses in the world under current international racing rules.

Whether you're a novice or an experienced hand, Virtual Skipper 2's magnificent graphics, breathtaking modeling of the sea and ultra-realistic racing conditions will satisfy your longing for the high seas. You'll enjoy customizable weather, extremely accurate course conditions and complete, intuitive navigation instruments, all perfectly rendered for an intense and realistic experience as you compete in prestigious races in single-player or multi player mode.

### Special Features :

- Captain any of 4 classes of boat: America's Cup, Open 60, Offshore Racer or Melges 24™.
- Sail away to 5 legendary courses: Trinité sur Mer/Quiberon, San Francisco Bay, Auckland (where the America's Cup™ is being held), the Needles in England and Porto Cervo in Italy.
- A challenging multi player mode allows you to use the interface to play against racers from all over the world (up to 8 players per race).
- Two players can also race on one computer (split screen).
- Choose your battle: championship mode, match race, or fleet race; or simply sail wherever the wind takes you over dozens of square km.
- Virtual Skipper 2 incorporates official international racing rules.
- Several levels of difficulty.

### More realistic than ever :

- Strikingly realistic modeling of the sea: waves, troughs and swells, puffs and lulls... they're all there!
- Superb top-quality, detailed graphics: the boats and race courses are modeled in 3D, from blueprints (for the boats) and satellite photos and nautical charts (for the water).
- An energetic crew in real time: you'll see your crew turning the winches, sitting out on the hull, changing sides during a jibe, and raising or lowering the sails.
- Customizable weather: wind strength, roughness of the sea, rain, fog, sunshine, etc.





# IN REVIEW

THE MOST AUTHORITATIVE REVIEWS AROUND

# GAMES



**H**ello again! I'm pinching this spot this month to introduce our new review scoring system. For quite some time now we've been worried about our venerable out-of-100 score chart as games were clearly separating out into familiar bands. First there was the Gold Award, for big releases that actually worked well, with a score of anything from 90 all the way up to 98. Then there was the solid-but-unspectacular game, scoring 84. Didn't matter what the game

was, it always scored 84. Then there were all those yet-another games that would get anything from 76 to 80. Then there was the occasional 60 or 59 and finally, down the bottom, those titles that were little more than comedy releases, with scores to match. Mission Humanity or Heist anyone?

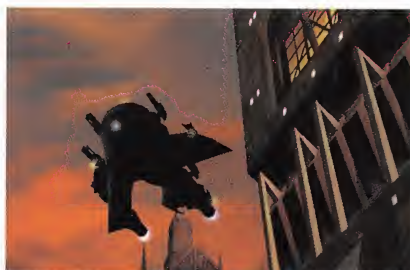
So in order to make the 1 to 100 scale meaningful again, we decided to revalue our percentage scores and officially split them into bands. We took our inspiration from the university marking system of Fail, Pass, Credit, Distinction and High Distinction, partly because it offered a useful division of the scale, but mostly because those are all really cool labels. And after all, isn't a game so much more than a film or a book? It not only has to tell a story or engage the player's sense of narrative, it actually has to work mechanically. There is both an objective and a subjective component to a game. That's why games that score less than 50 are considered failures. They get that mark because regardless of graphics, storyline, character interaction, they simply don't work. They fail.

Everything above 50 passes, and here's where subjectivity creeps back in. Is a game really good, or spectacularly good? We have guidelines, to be sure, but ultimately the difference between a Distinction and a High Distinction is the reviewer's personal gaming experience of the title being reviewed and other titles like it. We don't hide behind objectivity - these are reviews. They are subjective, the opinions of real gamers who are practiced enough in the art of review writing to be confident that the issues they have with a game will be encountered by the majority of other players. The reviewers speak for you, and we hope mostly they get it right.

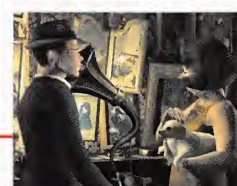
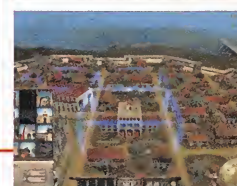
We believe this new scoring system will result in more meaningful ratings for your games. We believe it will result in a broader spread of scores, and make it easier for you to compare games as they sit there, all shiny and inviting on the shelf, begging for your \$100.

Just remember, a game that scores 74 is a good game, a game of credit. Even, you might say, a damn good game. You should seriously consider buying it. But a game that scores 89, now that's an essential addition to any but the choosiest of collections. It's a game of high distinction. It's what we want our games to be. Now, let the reviewing begin!

Anthony Fordham  
Editor  
anthonyf@next.com.au



- 66 Freelancer
- 72 Unreal 2
- 76 Splinter Cell
- 78 IGI2
- 80 Praetorians
- 82 Project Nomads
- 84 War & Peace
- 85 Post Mortem



GOLD AWARD	HIGH DISTINCTION	DISTINCTION	CREDIT	PASS	FAIL
The ultimate accolade. A game that receives a Gold Award is an essential purchase, and the only excuse for not owning it is either not having a powerful enough PC, or not having a PC at all. Or arms. It represents a new direction in gaming, a new benchmark against which all others will be measured. It defines its genre, or creates a new one. It is gaming. You must own it.	This is the finest in gaming. A fresh concept, a perfect execution, a meaningful extension to a tried and tested format, one or all of these are required for this score. We strongly recommend the purchase of each High Distinction game, but extremely fussy gamers may want to skip those HD games that don't also receive Gold Awards.	An intriguing new concept or a bold new direction that manages to pull its new trick off with a reasonable degree of flair. You will be impressed, at either the graphics, the gameplay or some other new element that you may not have encountered before. Or perhaps this is a familiar gaming concept, but one executed so well it's almost - but not quite - an essential purchase.	Solid, playable, largely bug-free, entertaining and maybe even a bit unexpected, these are the hallmarks of a game of Credit. You may have seen it all before, but you won't mind, because a Credit game does what it says on the box - it plays well and it keeps you hooked. An essential purchase? Not necessarily, but worth consideration.	A game that receives a pass is playable, but its concept may be flawed, its extras may be lacking or its graphical enhancements may have fallen off somewhere in a lengthy bug-fixing process. And bugs there may be, although in the end the game will, as we say, work. Purchase if you're curious, but discerning gamers will probably look for something more substantial.	There are more than 5000 games released each year. Some are gems. Some are merely unremarkable. Others are nothing more than a shameless grab for cash. Graphics will be rudimentary and gameplay will be worse. If you see someone considering a game that has failed, gently take them by the elbow and hurl them out of the shop. It's your duty as a good citizen.
90+	85-100	75-84	65-74	50-64	0-49



# Freelancer

Developer: Digital Anvil ■ Publisher: Microsoft ■ Distributor: Microsoft ■ Price: \$99.95 ■ Rating: MA15+ ■ Available: Now

## The day the revolution died

### SYSTEM

#### NEED

P3 450  
128MB RAM  
GeForce2  
1GB HDD

#### WANT

P4 2GHz+  
256MB RAM  
GeForce3  
1GB HDD

#### MULTIPLAYER

No

#### ONLINE

[www.microsoft.com/games/freelancer/](http://www.microsoft.com/games/freelancer/)  
Maybe you'd expect to find some actual useful information on this official website. Then again, if you've ever been to an official website, maybe not.

**H**ad Freelancer appeared suddenly on our desks with little or no fanfare, and had there not been a long and proud history of space-based trading games, our review would have run a little something like this: Freelancer is an extremely polished title with one of the leanest, most refined interfaces ever seen in a game. It offers an interesting take on space-combat: a universe that has a sort of digital pseudo-life, with ships ferrying here and there, security forces on patrol and pirates attacking innocent freighters. A reputation system allows the player to interact with various different factions to make money. There are ship upgrades, weapon upgrades, lots of star systems to explore, and an interesting central story to tie it all together and keep the action flowing.

Unfortunately, Freelancer hasn't appeared suddenly, it has had a long, protracted and very public development process. We've followed the departure of Wing Commander creator Chris Roberts, the announcement that Microsoft will publish the game, and the resignations and appointments of what seems like at

### 3D game, 2D world

Freelancer's world, backstory and main plot are all complete hogwash. Rank nepotism among the Roberts clan has seen Freelancer inexplicably and meaninglessly linked to Erin Robert's 2000 title Starlancer. Erin, Chris Robert's brother, saw some success with Privateer 2 (one of the few Origin-produced silliwood games with FMV that was actually worth watching), and presumably the fledgling Digital Anvil expected similar success with their first title, and banked on Freelancer having a ready-made audience in the ranks of rabid Starlancer fans. Sadly though, lacklustre gameplay meant Starlancer was destined to fade quickly into the sludgy mess at the bottom of the bargain bins, never to be mentioned again. Yet the link remains.

A space-shooter in the Wing Commander vein, Starlancer resurrected the Cold War and had the Russians fighting a loose alliance of 'free' countries across the length and breadth of the Solar System.

Freelancer begins with a slick bit of pre-rendered FMV showing the launch of five great colony ships, determined to escape Russian domination of the Solar System. Flick several hundred years into the future, and Humankind's home away from home stretches across the star systems of the Sirius sector, each 'themed' to one of the colony ships.

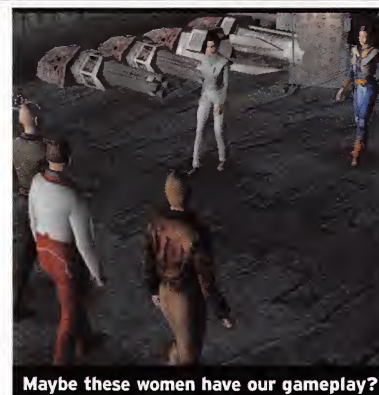
Unlike the Gemini Sector of Privateer or the ambitious (albeit flawed) Trisystem of Privateer 2, Freelancer is content to use racial stereotypes to create its geography. Liberty is the US-themed sphere of influence, where

### MULTIPLAYER

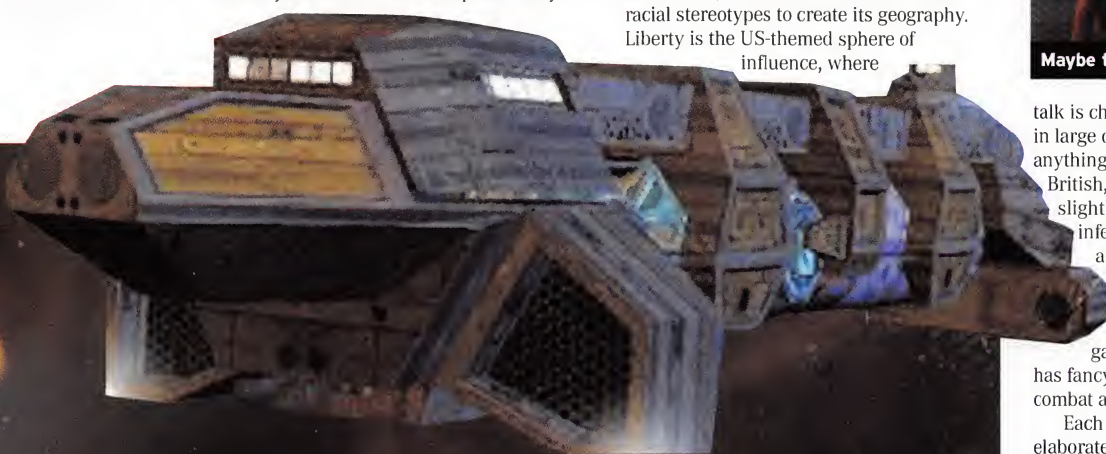
At the time of this review, multiplayer servers were not available for testing. We have high hopes for the multiplayer aspect of the game, which promises a mix of a large-scale persistent-state world and more intimate team-based gaming associated with the likes of Counter-Strike. However, as Freelancer's main focus is on singleplayer, we believe the above score will not be significantly affected by multiplayer performance. Expect a multiplayer report as soon as servers become available.



Which one of you stole my gameplay?



Maybe these women have our gameplay?



Space. It's dark and murky and full of ugly freighters

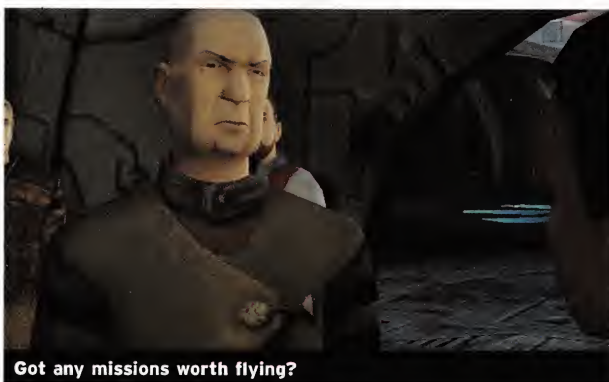
## Privateer was once criticised for not being like Elite. Well Freelancer is not enough like Privateer

least three entire development teams. And in the final game, all this upheaval shows. Freelancer is a title that has clearly been lovingly buffed, polished and tweaked by a large team of industry professionals hired by corporate committee on the strength of their resumes. But, and this is a big but, so many different people have been in command of the project that in the end we have been delivered an exercise in the creation of a space trading game, a game that works brilliantly but is almost entirely devoid of a distinct personality.

talk is cheap and the chink of ready money in large quantities buys you almost anything. Bretonia is, as the name suggests, British, and full of stiff upper lips, where slightly older money buys slightly inferior (but more expensive) products and everyone sneers at Liberty. Rheinland is German, belligerent, has the best weapons and functions as the 'evil' faction in the game. Kusari is vaguely Japanese, has fancy technology, a tight moral code of combat and really bad accents.

Each of the main factions has an elaborate but unimaginative back story featuring the usual guff about rebellions, unexpected supernovae, plagues, robot wars and an overriding determination not to descend into the open war that doomed the original Solar System. There are also Border Worlds and Independent Worlds for the player to visit, although their integration





Got any missions worth flying?



At least the capital ships are suitably chunky

into the game universe is sketchy and they serve as little more than locations to get more random missions from.

The game opens with an attack on Freeport 7, an enormous space station. Mysterious ships appear from nowhere, blow up the station, and depart. Cut to our hero, Edison Trent, casually strolling off a space cruiser on the Liberty world of Manhattan (yes, in New York system). He's anxious that an injured man be carefully looked

after as he owes Trent a great deal of money. Meanwhile, a mysteriously scarred individual smokes aggressively and drops the butt in slow motion.

## Onrailslander?

Awesome! thinks the player. Free and easy

on an alien world with nothing but a shadowy past and a smoking man to hinder me! Let's go make some cash! Unfortunately, unlike Privateer and Privateer 2, there is no cash to be had initially, and Trent has no ship. He is instead forced to take a job from a Liberty Security Force officer with fabulous hips and



Beads and mirrors for the natives?

## WHERE'S MY CARROT?

How do you make a freeform space game made up of essentially repetitive fly-here-shoot-these tasks work? By having an enticing set of rewards for the player. In between missions, the player should be able to browse the equipment shop and the ship dealer, drooling at all the awesome gadgetry they one day may be able to afford. Freelancer almost but not quite completely buggers up this aspect of the game. First up, there is little to no information about the various ships on offer, split as they are into Light and Heavy fighters and Freighters. The ships seem to have only cosmetic differences, and the player must read columns of small print to even figure out how one ship outperforms another. The equipment shop offers the usual selection of guns, missiles, mine layers and other such weaponry, but once again these are all incredibly generic and offer the player nothing but increased armour penetration. Like Privateer 2, there are too many ships, and distinctiveness is sacrificed for a perception of vast choice, which of course results in no real choice at all.

When it comes to equipment, Privateer still holds the crown with an impeccably designed set of ship components - everything from radars to jump drives. In Privateer, the player would think up some cool thing they would like to do - tractor in loot from defeated enemies, or jump to new systems - and would have to save up for a component to give them the ability to do this. Jump drive and tractor beams are both standard on all Freelancer ships, so there's no sense of glowing achievement at finally being able to make your first inter-system journey. Also, thanks to the generic and almost flavourless enemy, the only motivation to spend money on upgrades is to be able to defeat a suddenly more powerful foe in yet another likewise generic random mission, to make more money to buy more stuff that seems pretty much identical to the stuff the player already has. In fact, the only real carrot in the whole game is the promise of more scripted, plot-based missions which are unlocked after the completion of random tasks.

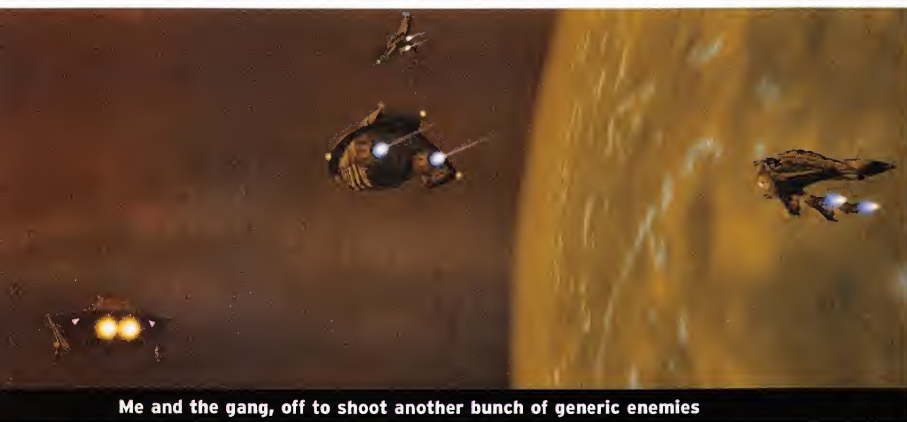


We're from the police. We've come for your gameplay



I saved up for this. Dunno why really





Me and the gang, off to shoot another bunch of generic enemies



Combat is quite tense and exciting

## I WANT TO BE FREE

The big question: does Freelancer allow you to roam the galaxy at whim, exploring new systems, taking missions, attaching yourselves to various factions and getting bonus access to new locations, a slave to your reputation, a wandering prince among men, all as promised? Well sort of, but there's no real reason to bother. As mentioned in the main text of the review, the story-based missions dominate the first 30 hours or so of play, and the player's reputation will be manipulated according to the whim of Digital Anvil. Spending hours painstakingly improving your standing with the LSF in the early game to get better missions will all come to naught when the story decides to instantly make the LSF your most bitter enemy. Mission payouts do improve the better your standing with a particular faction, but the missions are so generic (you can easily spot the template they're all built from the second time you approach the mission computer) that the payout is indeed the only thing that changes.

player ends up in possession of a mysterious alien artefact, and must travel the galaxy to unlock its secrets, and like Privateer 2, the player has recently escaped death and is wandering the galaxy after having all his possessions destroyed.

For a game that is billed as offering truly freeform gaming, this opening is disappointing to say the least. Rather than being allowed to choose a path (righteousness or criminality) or even try to straddle the great divide between the

After the player has completed the main story, they are free to roam the Sirius Sector at will, particularly the Border Worlds which don't feature heavily in the main story. But all there is to do is visit station after station, taking missions and being attacked by increasingly more powerful random foes. The lack of smaller sub-quests is at times almost painfully frustrating, because there is so much potential for side-plots. The promise of being able to dynamically join missions you spot flitting about in deep space is realised, but there's no reward for doing so beyond a terse thank you and a slight increase to your reputation with the relevant faction. Even Privateer had the Merchants and Mercenaries Guilds, where better missions were available for paying subscribers. Freelancer doesn't have that. It barely has anything. At the end of the day, it smacks of a troubled project that was feature-locked far too early. We wanted an RPG in space. Instead we got Wing Commander with extra bits. Oh well.



Good to see the fat guy from Sliders can still get work

Mob and the Man, Trent is forced to side with the LSF in order to even get a ship in the first place. Following the first couple of missions, which are compulsory, the player's path is irrevocably set: the LSF loves him, the Outcasts and Pirates hate him. There are simply no options for the player at the beginning of the game. Even Privateer, published in 1993 and using a sprite-based engine, allowed the player to make a name for themselves before the plot started to roll.

And it gets worse; once Trent accepts a mission from Jun'ko (or Juni as she's known) and the LSF he must do as he's told, flying a series of missions until Juni summarily dismisses him and the player is permitted to fly a few random missions until a certain milestone (usually net worth) is reached, whereupon Juni's head reappears in the comm window and the scripted missions start again.

Rather than a dynamic story woven around freeform gaming, it feels very much like Wing Commander with a bunch of random missions thrown in. Privateer was once criticised for not being enough like Elite. Well, Freelancer is not



Tradelanes replace smaller jumps



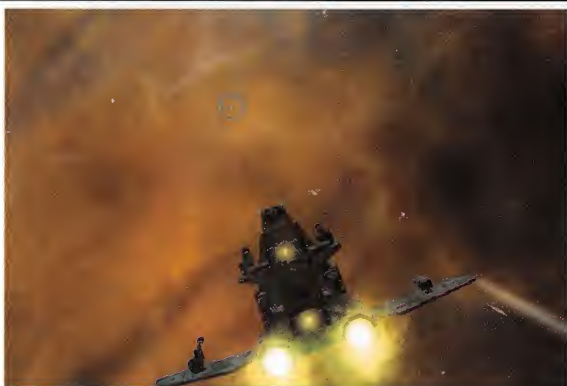
Clean interface means quick and dirty combat



## Put simply, the game does not do what it has promised to do - it does not offer freedom trading in a dynamic universe



Fighting in the murky muck of Bretonia



Nebulas and dust clouds aid in situational awareness



Approaching a docking ring



An Outcast fighter - troublesome



enough like Privateer. Put simply, the game does not do what it promises - it does not offer freeform trading in a

dynamic universe. Instead, it offers a set of linear story-based missions peppered with moments of relative freedom where the player must make cash to unlock the next set of scripted missions.

### So what does it do right?

It would therefore be easy to slag Freelancer off as a broken promise and a crushing disappointment after four years of waiting. However, the game can still be rewarding if approached with an open mind and a desire for some tight space-based action.

Freelancer focuses very heavily on combat. It is possible to buy and fly freighters, but the majority of ships are fighters, because all of the random missions on offer are combat missions.

As mentioned in the opening paragraphs, the Freelancer interface is one of the leanest and most perfectly honed seen in recent months, and certainly one of the best space shooter interfaces ever. It's clean, open and very functional. We mentioned in our final Beta report that the interface doesn't really feel like a sim, as the icons lean more toward the Windows Plus! style instead of the flat, understated iconography of the military. However, the suggestion is that the player is in control of a civilian craft, so the interface may be intended to represent a consumer-level control system.

Like I-War, the autopilot system has options for Approach, Dock and Formation, although it is vastly easier to use than I-War's at times arcane cockpit. There are also two MFD's in the bottom

left and right corners showing contact and weapons information respectively. Oddly enough, there is no ship status display, beyond a heavily simplified shield, armour and weapon charge indicator in the bottom centre of the screen. Target information is also limited, restricted to shield and armour information beneath the direction indicator at the edge of the

### SUB-QUEST? THAT'S JUST FOR RPGS!

Privateer 2 was the king of the random mission. The mission computer gave escort assignments, shadowy contraband runs, defiant frontal assaults, attachment to military brigades, even a series of linked missions where the player took the role of a stuntman in a new intergalactic movie (and the fact that the on-set battleship had real guns was 'just to add to the realism'). Freelancer by comparison leaves the player feeling nonplussed. Every single random mission is combat based - go to X and shoot Y. Occasionally a 'tractor in the criminal' mission will be available, but since it's standard practice in the game to hit B to tractor in loot after every kill, this hardly adds new flavour to the mission. Indeed, if after a 'tractor lifepod' mission the player then accidentally lands on the wrong planet, the mission will fail. Most disappointingly, there are no random assaults on capital ships. Every encounter is fighter-on-fighter. This is odd, because it's possible to buy a torpedo launcher for Heavy Fighters, and after a few hours in the game the player is left wondering when a torpedo target will ever make its presence felt. When encountering cap ships in the plot-based missions, helpful torpedo bomber always jump in and take care of it for you, while the smaller cruisers and gunships fall easily to standard guns. This is a shame, because the cap ships are well modelled and when they do fight each other it's tense and exciting, much like the golden days of Freespace 2. At the end of the day, mission selection in Freelancer simply involves looking down a list for the best paying mission, clicking it, and going to the launch pad. Most of the time you won't even need to read the briefing.



HUD when a ship is targeted, or on the actual target itself when it is in view. There's also no radar or scanner of any type, which can make some of the escort missions a little awkward, as it's hard to keep track of the threat levels on your assigned escort.

All in all, it's an extremely lean interface that has had all the fat trimmed off it during the 4-year development cycle. At times, such as in the afore-mentioned escort missions, it could almost be considered too lean, but by and large it functions extremely well and makes the

business of flying a space cruiser and shooting up endless waves of pirates as smooth and unconfused as possible.

## Nebula Effects Plus!

The default view has been discussed at length in our last two previews of this title; the player's ship is visible at all times, allowing a quick and easy inventory of the state of the weapons, hull integrity and general damage. It makes the game seem a little arcadey, and further diminishes the sim feel, but the increased field of view can show where gun and missile hits are coming from, and it makes a ship status screen unnecessary, as it's possible to instantly see which weapons have been destroyed. The default view can be changed, removing the graphic of the ship, but this has no noticeable effect on gameplay beyond impeding situational awareness slightly.

Beyond the ship, Freelancer is a pretty game, but not the graphical revolution it originally promised. One thing the game does do which is new is create real geography in space. Debris fields, ice asteroids, nebula and suns are all positioned relatively, allowing experienced players to determine their

position in a system simply by looking out the window. Like I-War, there's a real sense of place, rather than just being a tiny dot in the middle of a giant black sphere decorated with stars and generic nebula effects.

Enemy craft are highly detailed and there is a great variety in craft. However, the textures are



Rheinland Heavy Fighter - a seriously deadly chunk of hardware



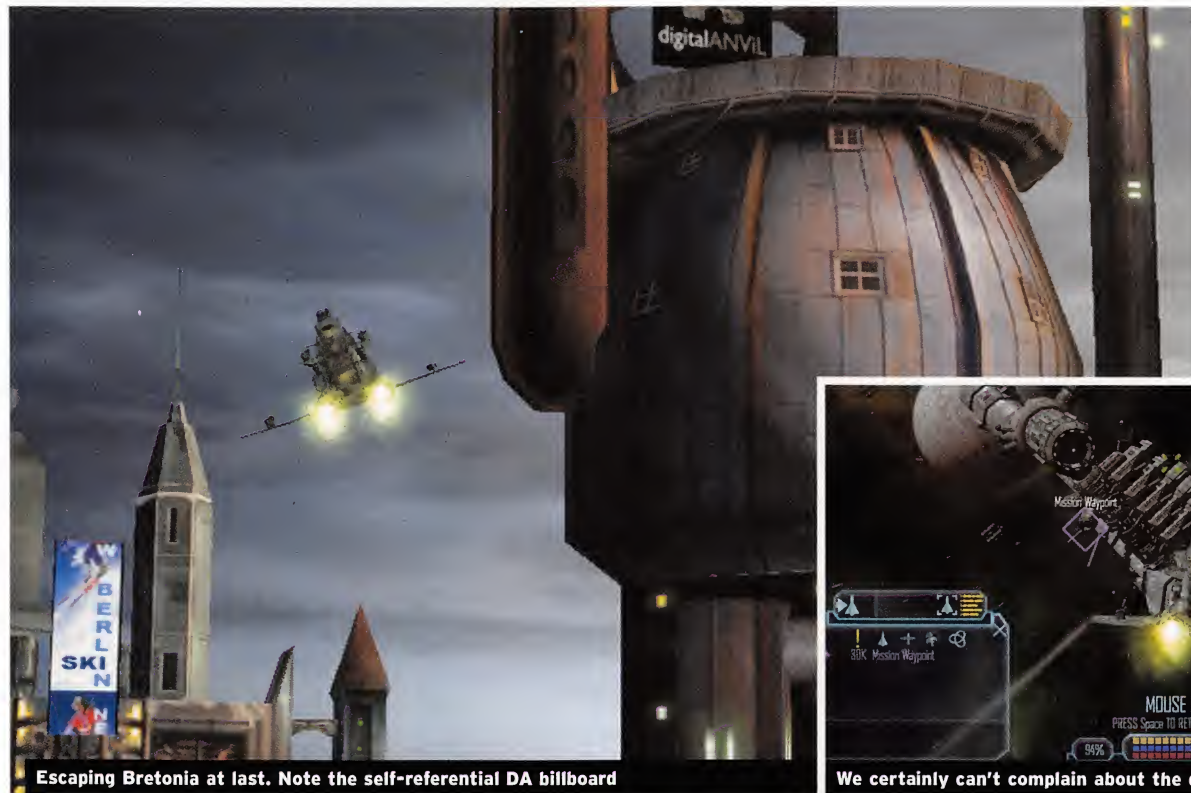
The Navicomp isn't very user friendly

somewhat drab, especially after exposure to the Indies of I-War with their gaudy graffiti. All in all, the ship design is superior to that seen in Privateer, but doesn't quite reach the giddy heights of the distinctive Kilrathi ships of the original Wing Commander.

Capital ships are suitably huge, and large space installations are sprawling and liberally encrusted with docking hatches and observation decks. The Freeports even have large hydroponic domes, like System Shock's Citadel Station. A docking request



More docking - note the lack of a comms menu



Escaping Bretonia at last. Note the self-referential DA billboard



We certainly can't complain about the graphics...





A Liberty Heavy - nice guns, good speed, weird looks



Weapons Platform - bane of the Freelancer

will have the player directed to "port A" or "hatch 3" and the ship will indeed automatically guide itself to the correctly labelled orifice.

## Problems

And yet it's difficult not to keep returning to the disappointments of this hotly awaited game. Far from being a revolutionary new space-trader, Freelancer lacks many of the basics of the genre. Communication is rudimentary - there is a Comms button

which seems to do little more than force a target to tell the player its intention. There is no Communications menu, no taunting enemies, no requesting docking or clearance, almost no interaction with the outside world at all.

The player also cannot hire wingmen to assist on missions; instead the mission briefing often promises backup, but it rarely even shows up. With no in-battle taunts or insults, the enemy lacks personality, and fighting one faction is much like fighting another - it's a far cry



Asteroid Field combat is actually not that hazardous

## GHOSTS OF SILLIWOOD

Silliwood was the term given to the slew of games released in the early 90s that featured nearly as much FMV as they did gameplay (sometimes more). Wing Commanders 3, 4 and Prophecy were the prime examples of this school of design, while Privateer 2 employed higher tier actors to provide a more engaging, albeit heavily interlaced, experience. Freelancer uses engine-generated 3D models for its characters, allowing for traditional camera angles and storytelling methods, while still keeping the game to a single CD (Silliwood games often came on as many as 5 CDs - thus the name). Unfortunately, while the quality of the models is very high and the voice acting is quite good, the very structure of the story causes problems. For a start, there are no bad guy characters in the first 10 hours of play. Various shadowy organisations pop up here and there and blow things up, but the only people the player actually interacts with are Juni, a couple of other LSF guys and the mysterious smoking man. Indeed, the

way the smoking man is set up at the beginning of the game makes the player think he will play a central role as the player's evil nemesis, but he's shot early on, just like the guy in medical who owes Trent money, and the dude with the bad moustache who shoots the smoking guy on the basis that the smoking guy is an artefact smuggler. For much of the game, the enemy is little more than a red triangle on the edge of your HUD. A sweeping saga this ain't. Character behaviour is rarely consistent - belligerent scientist guy X suddenly becomes friendly and chatty for no apparent reason. Grizzled space racing dude is a hopeless I'll-kill-you/I-love-you stereotype who is only given about three minutes of air time. Even Juni herself can't seem to make up her mind whether she's on a determined crusade for truth and justice, or scared witless of every alien artefact in the universe. It's disappointing, when freeform trading is sacrificed for story, and the story turns out to not even be particularly good.



from the crazy blockade running Kilrathi from Privateer - "Fight back, there is no honour in slaughter!" - or the Jincilla pirates of Privateer 2 - "Who shall I send the flowers to?" Further key faults are outlined in the various boxouts attached to this review.

The bottom line is that Freelancer is a disappointment, but only to those who have been eagerly awaiting the game. If you are approaching this title with an open mind, then you will find a tight space combat game that's easier to get into than Freespace, far simpler than either of the I-Wars, and offers some limited freeform gaming to add spice. It's a retro piece, evoking the flavour of the early nineties, where every second game was a space shooter, and giant cats took the place of little green men, but it has a modern look and a lean gameplay dynamic.

Freelancer can be best likened to a copy of a Picasso - it's technically flawless, but it's not real art. Don't expect too much from it, and it should keep you amused.

Anthony Fordham



Hard to miss, really



Installations are BIG up close

## RATING



### FOR

Perfect interface  
Old style shooting  
Impressive visuals

### AGAINST

Not really freeform  
Poor reward structure  
Lacks personality

## OVERALL

Not what we hoped for after 4 years, but a good space shooter if you can swallow your disappointment

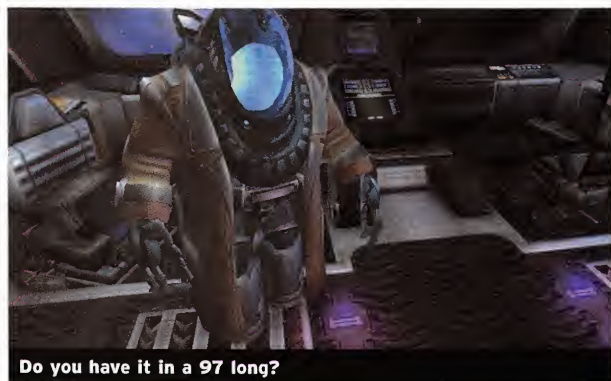
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# Unreal 2

Developer: Legend ■ Publisher: Infogrames ■ Distributor: GameNation ■ Price: \$89.95 ■ Rating: MA15+ ■ Available: Now

## A little less Unreal, a lot more standard FPS



Do you have it in a 97 long?

### SYSTEM

#### NEED

P4 1Ghz+  
256MB RAM  
GeForce3  
2GB HDD

#### WANT

P4 1.7Ghz+  
512MB RAM  
GeForce4  
2GB HDD

#### MULTIPLAYER

No

#### ONLINE

[www.unreal2.com](http://www.unreal2.com)  
Walkthrough, cheats,  
mod info, news and  
all the information  
you would ever want  
to know about the  
Unreal games,  
especially Unreal 2.



### THE ARSENAL

Unfortunately in our "behind closed doors" test of Unreal 2 we were unable to unlock every weapon in the game. What we do know though is that around 15 weapons are featured. Favourites such as the rocket launcher are there, as well as an interesting grenade launcher that can fire different grenades: fragmentation; poison gas; EMP; stasis and a few other undiscovered ones. Interesting weapons include a leech gun that slows the movement speed of an enemy, or with alternate fire, drains their life. The Takkra releases hunter killer drones that search and destroy enemies and the ultimate weapon is called the Mindclaw and is only described as a "fearsome psi weapon".

**W**elcome to the next in the highly-anticipated Unreal series. We've known about this game for more than a year, we've seen dozens of screens, peered at fuzzy low-res gameplay movies and speculated, speculated, speculated. Finally, after much confusion about whether or not it includes multiplayer (it doesn't) Unreal 2 is at last here.

Like Unreal Tournament 2003 before it, Unreal 2 doesn't revolutionise the genre but rather evolves it with better graphics and a few nice additions in regard to the story. Not that there's anything specifically broken about Unreal 2 as it's a solid FPS, but that's all it is. A stock standard First Person Shooter.

### Intriguing plot

Making the game more interesting is the introduction of a story that certainly goes against the grain of standard FPS personas. Your character has been demoted from a marine and placed into the Terran Colonial Authority. Here the story actually becomes quite interesting because your character isn't a hard nosed, "going to get back at authority for busting me down" type, but is a hero in the true sense of the word as he tries to heal and reunite a broken team. Each NPC has their own history which reflects their character and makes for a far more interesting game than just being thrown sequentially into missions.

Best described as a dysfunctional family, the crew have all been demoted for differing and mysterious reasons that are slowly unveiled as the game progresses.



Okay, but are the sharks really THAT dangerous?

Aida is your first officer and about the most normal member of the crew. Well, except for her vertical half cup clothing that makes you wonder if women of the future will have Velcro implants to stop from revealing more than they should. Her reason for demotion remains a mystery throughout the game but based on her strong desire to not see anyone harmed, let alone killed, implies some kind of terrible mistake

from her past that will be revealed later.

Isaak is the ship's engineer and is responsible for issuing you weapons and armour. His story is intriguing because the only information you're given at the beginning of the game is that he is a recovering alcoholic. Later you learn that this is because of a shattering experience he had in earlier life. Sort of like a futuristic Foreign Legion, Isaak joined the TCA to leave his addictions behind for some space-based rehabilitation.

Ne'Ban, the pilot is a Hex-Core alien on an officer exchange program with the TCA. Having no deep dark secrets to





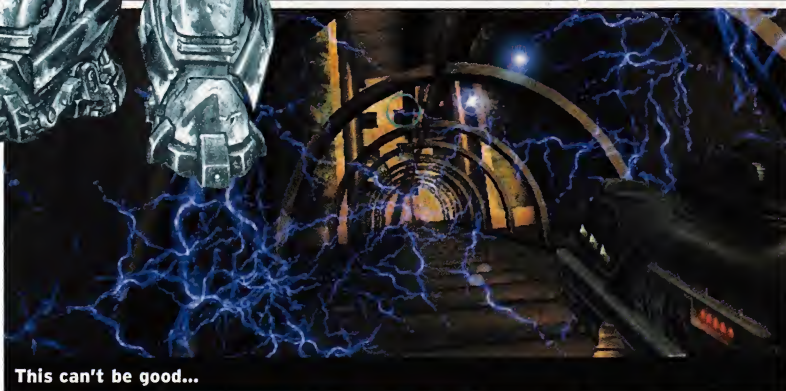


I will slay the ground!



I suppose that's supposed to frighten me?

happen next. Starting from the top, the lights go out in sequence and you begin to get that crazy de-ja vu. When darkness is finally complete a crashing thud on top of the elevator confirms that an enemy Skaarj has landed. He cuts the cable and the elevator makes a hasty descent to the bottom and a fight ensues. Sure, it's well scripted and it works well, but this is exactly like the famous



This can't be good...

end Unreal 2 still suffers because it has been 5 years since the original and the player is still being treated to a disappointingly familiar gameplay experience.

This starts from the first mission when a mining colony is attacked by the Skaarj. Approaching a door you quickly notice an NPC trying

to crawl out from under it. Heeding his cries for help, you hurry over to rescue him but as you get close, is dragged under the door and screaming ensues. You try and open the door but it's conveniently jammed, just like in the original Unreal.

Think this regurgitation of an old idea is just coincidence? Try this scenario: You're in an elevator descending to the lower levels of a mining installation when, surprise surprise, it jams. Looking up, the unusually transparent lift roof offers a less than subtle hint as to what will

hallway scene no more than 20 minutes into the original game which, as mentioned, we played five years ago.

### Greater mission variety

As was established in the intro, you're a completely different character in Unreal 2 and have a lot more at your disposal than your previous avatar, who if you recall just busted out of prison and had to build a new arsenal from bits and pieces around him. This time around one of the player's most valuable items is their ship and as captain of it the player is given respect and complete autonomy. As far as gameplay goes, this means you can walk around and examine the different rooms.

The main purpose of the ship is to provide a central location for mission briefings and this part of the game is done very well. When you're ready to take the next mission it's just a matter of meeting Aida in the briefing room and going over your next assignment. There's no sitting through a staid cinematic though. Instead Aida moves around the room activating terminals and holographic displays to explain your mission. This interactive precursor to a mission is a welcome



Isn't it nice to see a familiar face?

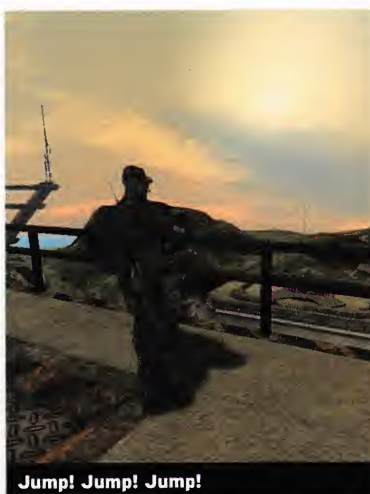
confess, his character provides some much-needed comic relief through mildly humorous and quirky dialogue that focuses primarily on the alien's poor grasp of the English language.

Amidst the turmoil of a universe about to erupt into conflict, the focus on your crew's individual problems is quite appealing and the dialogue manages to deliver this in a cringe-free way for the majority of the time. Making the situation more interesting and more complex is that friction exists between crewmembers: for instance, when Aida suspects that Isaak is still drinking. What makes this sombre story more interesting is that your character, as a commanding officer, makes every effort to help the crew with wise counsel and motivates them with encouragement to get the job done rather than use some cheap, militaristic, go-get-em style dialogue.

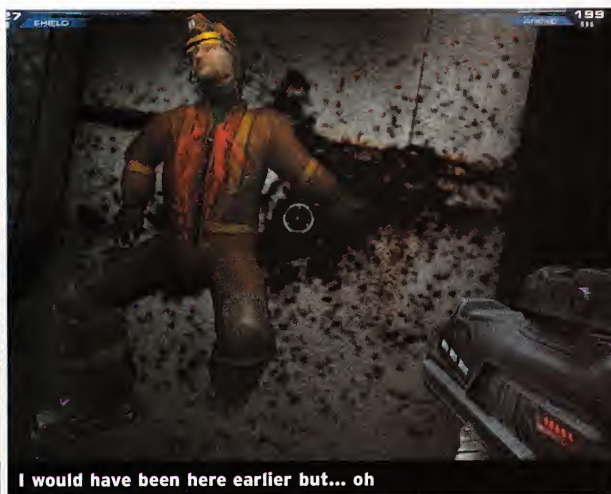
### Haven't I seen this before?

However, even though the story is well-implemented and the characters seem very real (for a computer game at least) in the

**Interesting, because your character isn't a hard-nosed "going to get back at authority for busting me down" type, for once**



Jump! Jump! Jump!



I would have been here earlier but... oh



change because it keeps you occupied while you're being informed and you have to pay attention and follow Aida around the room as you can miss relevant information.

The missions you embark on are a lot less lonely than in other FPSs as there's always plenty of dialogue within a mission from either Aida in the main ship, or sometimes from other sources. A good example of this is where you have to liberate an invaded mining installation. The only survivor, a technician, spots you on a security camera and then uses the PA to guide you to him. It's not revolutionary but it does help to reduce that infamous singleplayer firstperson isolation syndrome.

Another bonus to having your own ship is that it allows for greater mission variety such as a faraway colony that doesn't have to deal with a sentient alien invasion but an experiment gone wrong. A ray that mutates and enlarges creatures to many times their size is the cause of the problems. But the point worth drawing attention to is that the beam affects any creature and if a neutral or allied entity is persuaded to enter the ray, it will help defend you.

## Send in the marines

Early in the game you establish that one of your avatar's goals is to be reinstated as a marine and in order to get on military's good side, plenty of situations make themselves available.

The predominant marine mission involves their rescue but in order to keep the action varied, the rescue requires a different set of activities. Called perimeter missions, they're interesting because they task you with protecting an area for a certain period of time. This involves setting up laser fences and automated turrets that you need to place strategically in order to funnel the attackers into your and the marines fire. A nice distraction from wandering around, flicking switches and dispatching the odd bad guy, these missions are purely about throwing lots of enemies at you and becomes like a kind of 3D Space Invaders.

## I can crawl faster than this

The first and biggest problem with this game, one that will definitely affect you in combat is that you move much too slowly. Comatose, lethargic, sedentary, sluggish and torpid are all applicable words to describe just how you move and I kid you not, travel eventually degenerates into a jump fest as you pound on the keyboard in desperation to get anywhere within a reasonable amount of time.

If you missed out on the original Unreal, one of the nice additions it brought to FPS combat was the ability to

double tap any of the movement keys to make a quick somersault in that direction. Perfect for diving out of the way of pesky projectiles, in Unreal 2 you can double tap yourself into a stupor and it will achieve nothing - the double tap dodge is gone. Even more frustrating, the first time you encounter a Skaarj he will dive all over the place as if rubbing your nose in your lost abilities. Feign dead, another nice combat addition from Unreal is also sorely missing. Sadly, without the innovations from the original Unreal, FPS combat becomes even more generic and the samey factor does detract from the game.

At least enemy AI has had some serious work put into it and the enemies are even more dangerous and capable than those from Unreal. The most predominant new AI routine is that the enemy recognises when you've run out of ammo, or even if they just see you reloading, and will use that moment to dive at you and generally take advantage of your downtime.

The AI is also relevant to the creature you're fighting and while an alien Skaarj uses dexterity to get the upper hand, human opponents (in the form of hired mercenaries for unscrupulous companies) rely on battle armour and superior weaponry. Actually, the battle armour makes for a nice pseudo-strategic element. If for example you use enough ammo to just drop the enemy then you can casually loot some suit energy from the corpse. If however you gib your opponent then you're obviously not going to be able to loot any energy.

Surprise is another big element of combat and being "sucked in" by a Jurassic Park velociraptor tactic is kind of cool. This clever use of AI involves one alien that works hard to get your attention by making a noise or standing behind a pane of glass gesturing wildly. With your focus elsewhere, two enemies quickly flank you and if you're not ready, it can be a bit of a brown pants moment. Fun, but as you're unlikely to get caught out a second time is only a one off scare.

## Graphics

Unreal 2 looks good but in no way does the texture quality match UT2003. Neither low res, nor particularly high res, textures are of an above average quality but there are still times where dithering in the texture is visible. The UT2003 Phobos map, which has an almost identical style to Unreal 2, uses



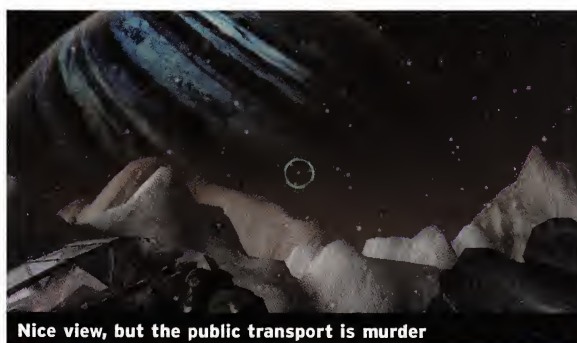
Go team. You pack of dropouts.



Someone should chuck an emperor down there and clear this lot out

considerably higher resolution textures and has slightly more vibrant colours. That's not to say the graphics in Unreal 2 are bad but after UT2003, it would appear that they have been reduced in quality to ensure greater frame rate on lower spec machines.

Like Unreal, the engine can render two types of environment, internal and external with both environments running at similar framerates. Indoor levels are well made and



Nice view, but the public transport is murder

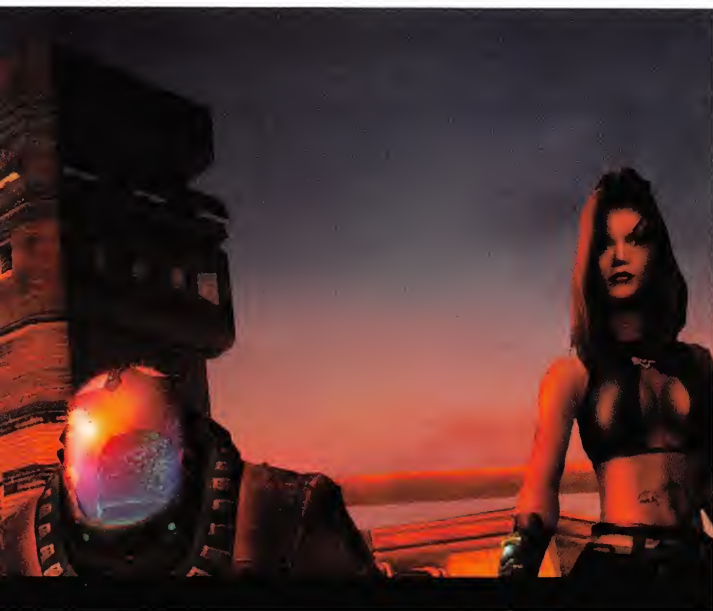


Dredging for Boba Fett

## EASY ON THE MACHINE

Systems that weren't quite powerful enough to run UT2003 won't necessarily be alienated by Unreal 2. Due to slightly lower resolution textures and the nature of a linear game, Unreal 2 is a little kinder on the graphics card and processor. That's not to say that on a P3 500 Unreal 2 is going to scream but a 1.2Ghz+ processor with a Geforce3 makes for a reasonably playable platform at 800x600.





## The missions you embark on are less lonely than in other FPSs as there's always plenty of dialogue



Jodie Foster is in there somewhere...



I wonder if it will be friends with me?



And me without my toasting fork and marshmallows...

feature enough geometry to differentiate environments and keep them interesting. Pipes, ducts, railings and other heavy industrial scenery are all well rendered and there are plenty of curved surfaces to remind you that this is a next-gen engine.

One particular indoor level demonstrates some of the nice new graphical effects of Unreal 2 quite well. An out of control plasma beam is being reflected around the lab by big chunks of metal but what's nice about this is that the reflective metal surfaces are exactly that, reflective. Entirely perspective correct, the room, including the beam, is accurately reflected on the hunks of metal which also melt into a pool of molten goo on the ground - a very effective use of multi-texturing and geometry.

One of the more interesting outdoor levels has the player searching for an alien artefact on a planet that's inhabited by a giant 'thing'. Sort of like a planetary bacterial infection, masses of tissue cover the landscape with tree-size hair follicles poking through that make for a graphically impressive albeit gross kind of environment.

Outdoor levels also feature weather effects which are all well done. Fogging is used to good effect to reduce visibility and if raining, expect sheet lightning and on the colder planets it snows.

Another nice graphical touch is that if firing at an enemy with a machine gun, the shots spark and ricochet off the armour. For the bloody minded, when shooting or blowing up an enemy, their blood splatters and sprays all over the wall. Ultimately though, the graphics in Unreal 2 are not of the magnitude we were led to believe but can be fairly described as being of above average quality.

### Sound

Shipping with EAX 2.0 support as well as Direct Sound 3D, Unreal 2 offers the complete surround sound experience. All the sound effects are good: explosions, weapons discharge and voices. The music however is completely forgettable and the fast paced thriller music didn't do



Always with the alien spider drones!



Oh go put a shirt on

## DON'T PLAY WITH YOURSELF!

Whether you've finished with the single player game or not, when the time comes that you want to play online, go and get Unreal Tournament 2003. The confusion regarding a multiplayer component can finally be cleared up as there isn't one in Unreal 2. We once said there was, Legend once said there was, Epic denied it, we denied it, Infogrames reignited the debate, we reported it again, the folks online screamed at us, we mended our ways, some other website said it was in again. Well it isn't. Not even a little bit.

anything to get the adrenaline going. Another strange omission was that in the original Unreal, the ping of a shell casing hitting the ground was quite exceptional but in Unreal 2, isn't quite as sonically prominent. Overall, the soundscape is complete with plenty of effects, even those from little alien creatures, and results in a rich and alive environment.

### Should I get it?

Perhaps it's just a case of sequel syndrome where the second iteration doesn't quite capture or invoke the same feelings of newness and discovery as the original. The main story, and that of the crew which unfolds on your ship between missions is a welcome addition but the removal of double taps and feign dead from combat was an annoying omission. If you're hungry for a new FPS to conquer, then Unreal 2 will definitely appeal but if you're relatively indifferent towards the genre there's nothing really innovative or exciting enough in Unreal 2 to persuade you to buy it. Although graphically superior to the competition, when it comes to the crunch, Unreal 2 is an above average First Person Shooter in a rather crowded market.

Jere Lawrence

### RATING



### FOR

Compelling story  
Varied environments  
Interesting missions

### AGAINST

Movement too slow  
No double-tap  
Ingenuine flavour

### OVERALL

An impeccable FPS with some innovative elements, but one that only graphically overhauls the original

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# Splinter Cell



Developer: Ubi Soft ■ Publisher: Ubi Soft ■ Distributor: Ubi Soft ■ Price: \$89.95 ■ Rating: MA15+ ■ Available: Now

## A PC game where you really need an Xbox controller to play?

### SYSTEM

#### NEED

P3 1GHz+  
256MB RAM  
32MB Videocard  
1GB HDD

#### WANT

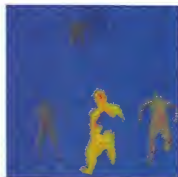
P4 2GHz+  
256MB RAM  
GeForce3  
1GB HDD

#### MULTIPLAYER

No

#### ONLINE

www.nsa.gov  
Boldly employing an  
endless succession  
of Baldwins to  
protect the children  
of the earth from fat  
drug dealers and  
goosey aliens alike



**C**onsole port. It's not a phrase that inspires confidence in the minds of most PC gamers. However, there are exceptions to the rule and in the case of a game such as Splinter Cell which has had Xbox players falling over themselves trying to invent new superlatives, it may be good time to revise preconceived notions about the quality of console ports.

In case you're one of the few people in the gaming world who hasn't heard about Splinter Cell, let's set the scene. It's a Tom Clancy product but unlike other titles, like Ghost Recon and Rainbow Six, this is neither based on a Clancy novel or a first person squad-based tactical shooter. Instead, it's a solo affair played from a third person perspective with an even greater emphasis on stealth.

### Fisher of men

In Splinter Cell, you assume the role of Sam Fisher, an elite operative of the National Security Agency's covert black-ops arm called the Third Echelon. In typical Clancy cloak-and-dagger fashion, Third Echelon uses lone field agents supported by a remote team to gather intelligence. Set in the year 2004, Fisher is sent to T'bilisi, the capital of the former Soviet state of Georgia, to investigate the disappearance of two CIA operatives. While there, you'll uncover a conspiracy of multinational proportions to seize a nuclear weapon and use it against the US.

Predictably, the game takes players to different locales in Russia, the US, and Myanmar and to locations as diverse as an abattoir and an oilrig in the middle of the Caspian Sea. Despite the different settings, the overall feel of the game is remarkably similar since most of the action takes place in near-darkness, and in suitably oppressive



She means nothing to me!

interior environments.

As mentioned above, Splinter Cell plays from a third person perspective which was essential in order for all the fancy moves that Fisher can pull off to be incorporated. Apart from being able to perform the usual evasive rolls, grabbing of ledges and looking around corners, you can also rappel down ropes, whiz down zip lines, and crawl monkey-like while hanging upside down from beams. Fisher can also sneak up and grab enemies from behind, and then force them to cooperate or provide crucial information. If said enemies are of the useless or stupid variety you can still put them to good use as human shields. Sadly, one of Fisher's coolest moves is his split jump allowing him to straddle two parallel walls and then fire upon unsuspecting



WHITE HOUSE PRESS ROOM  
ATTACK. U.S. TRAINING FORCES ARRIVE IN MYANMAR.  
I... did not have... sexual relations... with that sheepdog

enemies below is under-utilised.

Some may be disappointed to learn that there is no option to revert to a first person perspective. When you draw a weapon the camera shifts to an over-the-shoulder view that does the job reasonably well although of course some visibility is lost. Thankfully, the camera in the default perspective can be freely rotated to eliminate most cases of dodgy camera angles and objects obstructing your view.

### Funk it up!

Executing Fisher's arsenal of moves is not always easy due to the inconsistent control

### LOOKING SWEET

Splinter Cell runs on a tweaked version of the Unreal Warfare engine and the game sports some incredible dynamic lighting and shadowing effects. When news of a PC version was first announced there were some concerns raised that the effects would be scaled back to accommodate a minimum configuration setup running a GeForce2. Well, rest assured because while the game is a resource hog, the PC version looks every bit as good as on the Xbox. Apart from the lighting effects there are some excellent cloth physics, excellent hi-res textures in the detail-filled environments, and amazingly lifelike animation of all of Mr Fisher's moves.





## There is no doubt that this game will sell well, but many its features we've seen before, albeit not in quite so polished a package

system. Without any gamepad support, players are left with a standard WASD plus mouse setup which can prove fiddly, even with the jump button moved from the Backspace (which is where it was inconveniently located in the demo) to the Shift key. While many of Fisher's moves can be performed intuitively at the touch of a button, others require him to be in an exact position. Rate of movement in the PC version is controlled using the mouse wheel. Practically speaking, this makes it a lot less likely for players to inadvertently move a bit too quickly, and thereby alert enemies to your presence, which was always a risk with the Xbox's analogue stick.

No espionage game is complete without a selection of gadgets and tools to choose from. In *Splinter Cell* there are the mundane variety like an optical cable used to peek under doors, and goggles with nightvision and thermo-imaging capabilities. The more

sophisticated include micro-explosive lock picks and different cameras which can be fired onto walls and ceilings to monitor sentry patterns, emit a noise to distract enemies, or disperse a cloud of CO2 to knock them out.

### Right tool for the job

These tools are not only fun to use but often crucial to mission success. The really unfortunate thing is that most of the projectile cameras and gadgets need to be fired from Fisher's 5.56mm SC-20K assault rifle, which is only obtained once players are about halfway through the game. While the developers have assured us that the SC-20K only becomes available when the situation requires it, it would have been nice to have been given greater freedom of choice in deciding when to rely on the hardware and when to use Fisher's physical skills.

Each of *Splinter Cell*'s missions follow a rigidly linear path and the stealth-at-all-costs angle is pushed to such a degree that sometimes you feel like dropping a bunch of frag grenades just for the hell of it. The linear gameplay and orchestrated routines mean that mission success is determined more by trial and error and frustrating restarts rather than adjusting to situations. As such, *Splinter Cell* will appeal most to meticulous and patient gamers.

### AI quibbles

The game's typical sentry isn't exactly the brightest crayon in the box. Most follow set movement patterns and in the rare instances of open firefights, most will simply stand around waiting to get shot rather than exhibit some of the more complex counter-tactics found in several other quality FPS titles. Although Fisher can only take a minimal amount of damage

before becoming another statistic in Third Echelon's little black book, most of the challenge in *Splinter Cell* comes from avoiding the game's many instant mission failure triggers rather than surviving an enemy attack. Overall, the challenging difficulty level means that there's a reasonable amount of life in this game, even with the short number of missions. Although lack of multiplayer obviously hurts,



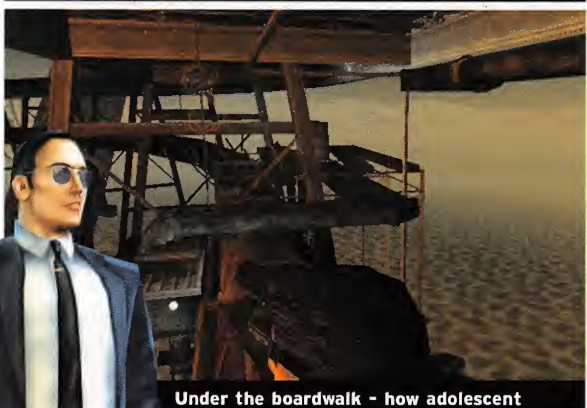
Two-week business trip my arm. I'm sick of hiding in basements

### BEEN HERE BEFORE

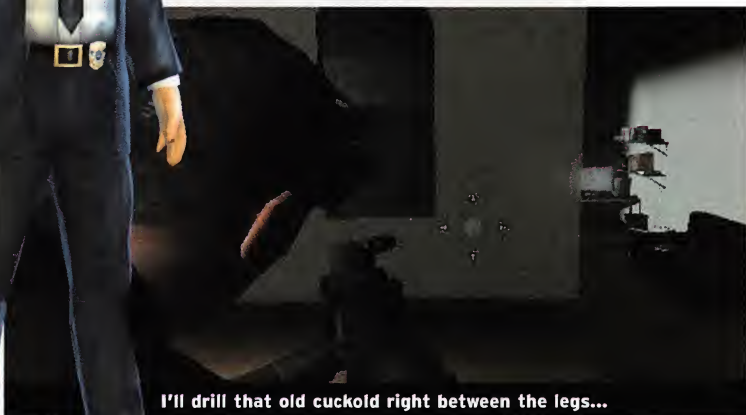
If *Splinter Cell*'s story sounds a little familiar, you may be thinking back to *Ghost Recon* which also revolved around the volatile former Soviet state of Georgia and suppression of a politically volatile situation. The broad similarities are actually a coincidence since the storyline for the two games were written separately by different writers. *Splinter Cell*'s story is the duller of the two and the use of ugly-looking cutscenes (which are far inferior to the actual in-game graphics) of fictitious news broadcasts to advance the story serves only to retard the flow of the game rather than support the actual gameplay.



I've burnt down his house... what do you mean no insurance?!



Under the boardwalk - how adolescent



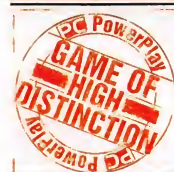
I'll drill that old cuckold right between the legs...

downloadable extra missions are promised.

While it has been touted as redefining the stealth-action game genre, in reality *Splinter Cell*'s core gameplay doesn't vary far from what you might have experienced in games like the *Thief* series and the recently released *Hitman 2*. The gameplay is some of the best yet seen in the genre but it doesn't push the envelope very far. There's no doubt the game will sell by the truckload, but many of the features it offers we've seen before, albeit not in quite so polished a package.

Derek Lee

### RATING



### FOR

Amazing visuals  
Cool gadgets  
Special moves

### AGAINST

Awkward control  
Overly linear  
Limited replay

### OVERALL

A core of familiar stealth gameplay, surrounded by very tasty new gadgets, moves and storyline

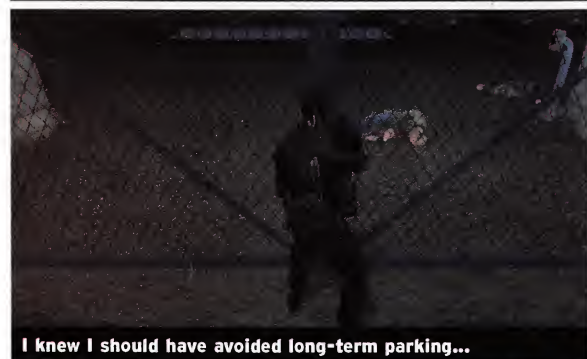
88



# IGI2

Developer: Codemasters ■ Publisher: Infogrames ■ Distributor: GameNation ■ Price: \$89.95 ■ Rating: MA15+ ■ Available: Now

## Even more mindless slaughter for your PC



### SYSTEM

**NEED**  
P3 750MHz  
64MB Ram  
16MB Videocard  
600MB HDD

### WANT

P4 1GHz+  
128MB RAM  
32MB Videocard

### MULTIPLAYER

Yes (via Germany)

### ONLINE

www.igi-usa.com  
All hail the  
International  
Gemmological  
Institute! Those dozy  
bastards valued my  
garnets at sixteen  
bucks a bushell! I  
was fully ripped off!

that it really takes something quite unique these days for a FPS to stand out. The present market is so crowded with them, that even exceptionally good games risk being tossed into the average box just because they end up seeming so damn familiar to one of the last umpteen shooting games to have been released.

### There's no other spy like...

For its part, IGI2 (the IGI in this case doesn't stand for International Gemmological Institute) does succeed as a slightly different James-Bond-style shooter (your character, David Jones, even has a toffy pommy accent), but ultimately the game ends up being very similar to Soldier of Fortune, just without the extreme gore. Even the thermal goggles, which are one of IGI2's cooler features, have been done before in Alien vs Predator. Of course, just because something is similar to another game, or contains elements that have been seen before, doesn't necessarily make it a bad game, it just means that a truly exceptional level of polish is required to pull it out of the same-old, same-old category. Does IGI2 possess this level of polish? The answer is, partly. There are some extremely good facets to the game, but much of it just feels way too familiar to everything else.

Despite being not quite as authentic as Ghost Recon and Raven Shield, IGI2 is still more realistic than your average FPS. After all, less realism does not mean less fun, in fact, a lot of the time it means precisely the opposite. Those that find Tom Clancy's games too much of a handful, and Soldier of Fortune too rambo-esque, will be right at home with IGI2, which strikes a fine balance between picky realism and gung-ho, bullet-flinging fun.

### Easy to play

Control is quite simple, and sticks to the tried and true WASD key combination for movement, with a variety of other configurable keys for using special gadgets such as the binoculars, thermal goggles or the computer map. Each weapon has a primary fire (left mouse button) and alternate fire (right mouse button). For most assault rifles, the alternate fire cycles through the rate of

fire (i.e. single shot, burst or fully automatic), but for the knife this switches between a slashing and stabbing motion.

IGI2 also uses a special key to peek. Holding down this button, you are able to lean from left to right, and up or down in order to sneak a quick look around corners. For some reason, your weapon is unavailable while peeking and you're unable to move. If you do catch a glimpse of someone around the corner, you're forced to stop peeking and strafe (i.e. sidestep) around the corner in order to pop them. This feature is much better implemented in Raven Shield, where you are able to also duck, stand, move and fire your weapon while peeking.

### IGI2 vs Tom Clancy

The game also uses the same type of targeting system employed in the Tom Clancy games (Rainbow Six, Ghost Recon and Raven Shield). This consists of a reticule that expands when your aim is off, and contracts to a pinpoint when you're aiming accurately. The reticule spreads out while you're moving but contracts if you stand still for a second. This simulates taking a precise aim at a target.

Another small facet of IGI2 that is reminiscent of Rainbow Six and company is the movement system, which allows the player to crawl along the ground on their stomach, move in a crouch or move standing straight. Running is only an option when you're standing bolt upright, and it causes far too much noise to warrant an "always run" option, as can be seen in some other, less realistic titles. Needless to say, crawling is the stealthiest method of movement, and it often allows you to sneak right up on your opponent before they notice you.

Despite a strong emphasis on stealth, and a few similarities to the Tom Clancy games, IGI2 is, in the end, a slightly less realistic shooter, much more similar to Soldier of Fortune than anything else. For example, the targeting system in IGI2 is more forgiving than its Tom Clancy counterparts; the reticule contracts to a pinpoint aim much quicker than the more

### STEALTH IS THE KEY

IGI2 focuses heavily on stealth, surprise and concealment. The most effective method of play is darting from shadow to shadow, taking out your enemies with precise, silenced shots. The HUD has a special stealth metre that lets you know just how furtive your movements are. Running and jumping (not to mention bursts of machine gun fire) will make your stealth metre skyrocket; actions that are liable to immediately give away your position. Crawling is the most crafty method of movement, and often allows you to bypass scores of guards without them even knowing you're there.







I WILL get my car back!



Oh get up, we know you're faking

## THE RUSSIANS ARE COMING!

The computer-controlled enemies are okay for your average FPS, but maybe a little too stupid for a game that attempts to create a foe of unswerving dedication and loyalty. Often after they are hit (assuming they're not dead), the guards will grunt some garbled Russian but continue to hold their ground, peering into the darkness and offering an extremely easy target to finish off. On a brighter note, they perform some cool commando rolls (pity the player is unable to do that!), and will not hesitate in setting off alarms if you're too clumsy.



This is why I never eat the fish



Die vending machine of global terrorism!

you go down. On the other hand, one shot in the head will down most of your enemies (most of the time) although it will take quite a few more bullets in other locations in order to drop them.

### A variety of weapons

On the flip side, IGI2 allows a level of freedom that's simply not available in Ghost Recon or Raven Shield. For example, you have the option to swim through water and leap over barriers. Most notably, IGI2 also allows the player to pick up enemy weapons, which has never been an option in the Clancy games (Ubi Soft claims that a real covert ops agent would never exchange his own weapon for an enemy's, thus they simply do not allow it).

Apart from the guns you may pick up, IGI2 comes with an impressive assortment of optional weaponry, such as the Type 64 SMG, MAC-10 machine pistol, G11 assault rifle, M82A1 Sniper Rifle and SPAS-12 automatic shotgun, just to name but a few!

Another cool feature of IGI2 (that's not present in other games) is that fact that almost every

object can be penetrated with bullets, providing your gun is powerful enough! Not only can you shoot through doors and windows, but also through walls, crates and vehicles (if you have a really powerful popper). Needless to say, it comes in handy that the thermal goggles also allow you to see through structures.

In the end, IGI2 can - in some way or another - be compared to almost every other FPS shooter out there. It all boils down to a title that is a pleasant mix of many other games, with a scrap of originality thrown in to boot. Although it has failed to completely stand out head-and-shoulders above the rest, IGI2 is a solid title and is certainly worth considering if you're a fan of covert shooting games. You should probably cast your eye over our Splinter Cell review (p76) before making a final decision.

Victor Webster



Play it again Sam...

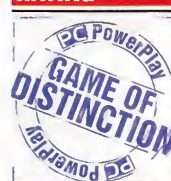


More hapless fish eaters



Yup... it's that ol' red mist of rage again

### RATING



#### FOR

Thermal goggles  
Cool weapons  
Shoot thru stuff

#### AGAINST

Same old, same old  
Clumsy AI  
Inadequate 'peeking'

### OVERALL

A blend between  
Soldier of Fortune and  
Raven Shield, with a  
few extra touches  
thrown in

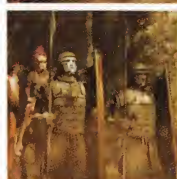
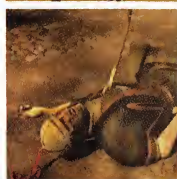
77



# Praetorians

Developer: Pyro ■ Publisher: Eidos ■ Distributor: GameNation ■ Price: \$79.95 ■ Rating: MA15+ ■ Available: Now

## When in Rome, be an isometric RTS



**J**ulius Caesar was once quoted as saying, "If you must break the law, do it only to seize power: in all other cases observe it". Leaving aside arguments that things haven't changed all that much in 2000 years, it's easy to see why, with this mentality, the Roman Empire at its height united the Mediterranean for the first and only time in history. Praetorians from Pyro Studios, developers of the excellent Commandos, now gives you a chance to relive this extraordinary period of conquest.

It would be easy to dismiss Praetorians as just another RTS, albeit one with a Rome-flavoured twist. Last year we saw another Roman-themed RTS, Legion, fall flat on its helmeted face so there's reason enough to be sceptical. Thankfully, Praetorians marches along a different path and eschews resource gathering and micromanagement for good old-fashioned combat. The expanse of the Roman Empire was won on the back of its military prowess after all.

### Three's company

The three civilisations featured in Praetorians are the Romans, Barbarians (Gauls), and Egyptians, although the last two are only selectable in multiplayer or skirmish mode. Standard units - such as

infantry, archers, cavalry, and pike or spearmen - are common to each side. Then, there are special units unique to each side, so for instance the Romans have the Praetorian Guard, the Barbarians have the heavy cavalry, while the Egyptians possess charioteers.

Each side plays quite differently to suit different player styles. The Romans are the most structured force with larger unit numbers, but the slowest rate of movement. Their defensive capabilities and organization mean they excel in siege situations and in typical line battles. The Barbarians use smaller sized units which are fast and generally more powerful. This means that they specialise in hit-and-run tactics but find themselves overwhelmed if caught in the open field. The Egyptians fall somewhere between the two. Their units are faster than the Barbarians and can swarm opposing forces with their speed and fanaticism, but they are not as cohesive or well-drilled as the Romans. There is a fairly even balance between each of the three sides to ensure that a player's skill and military mind is most determinative in whether battles are won or lost.

### Bring back the draft

In Praetorians, you typically begin each mission with a mixed set of troops led by a commander. The only resources to "gather" are villagers who inhabit, well, villages scattered across each map. Taking control of a village requires no more than having your light infantry troops construct a garrison next to it. If the village is occupied by an opposing force it will first be necessary to put a sandal in their backside, raze their garrison to the ground, and construct your own.

Once a village is under your control, you can begin recruiting villagers and turning them into troops which are produced as a set unit rather than individually. This feature makes it easy to group and order units, an important consideration since incorrectly sending a unit to attack another against which it has little effect can see you deader than Caesar himself. Each village has a limited capacity to produce troops, which is based on their initial population size. New villagers regenerate but at a slow pace, which means you can't just rely on controlling one village.

Strategy elements come into play for two reasons. Firstly, in order to take control of a village and begin recruiting villagers, one of your force's commanders needs to occupy the village. Since commanders play an important role in Praetorians by boosting the morale of troops within their area of influence and making them fight more effectively, deciding when to have your commander in the field is an important tactical consideration. Secondly, Praetorians' system of recruiting new troops means you will have to decide whether to employ slash-and-burn tactics from village to village and keep your force mobile, or seize control of a few villages, build defensive towers and establish a more permanent base.

### DID YOU SEE THAT?

Graphically, Praetorians is a bit up and down. While all the maps look great and there are some excellent weather effects, the units themselves look rather blocky and ill-defined. The upside is that they are all excellently animated so that you can almost feel the thunder of hooves when your cavalry descends upon a force of hapless archers. The problem is that when battle is joined everything becomes an amalgamated mess, making it difficult to see exactly what is going on. This makes it hard to try and withdraw troops if you're copping a shellacking.



At least we know what team we're on

## Praetorians will mostly appeal to strategy fans who want to concentrate purely on commanding troops and battles

### SYSTEM

#### NEED

P3-500  
64MB RAM  
16MB Videocard  
500MB HDD

#### WANT

P4 1GHz+  
128MB RAM  
GeForce3  
500MB HDD

#### MULTIPLAYER

Yes

#### ONLINE

[www.megsplace.com/pi.html](http://www.megsplace.com/pi.html)  
If you saw The Net with Sandra Bullock and if you remember the little Pi symbol in the corner of her screen and if you remember that it stands for the Praetorian secret world domination organisation thing then this site will be relevant to you. On the other hand, that is a lot of ifs...



Rain Roman-flavoured flaming death!



Throw it over the water tower... it bounces off...



Afraid of nothing but the sky falling on their heads





Burn the thatch, salt the earth, rape the cattle...



...and stampede the women and children



That giant dotted line is attacking!

## Ground Forces

Apart from deploying and controlling units in general battle, the other major consideration in Praetorians is terrain. Like many other RTS titles, seizing and launching attacks from higher ground is critical to success. Yet other aspects of the terrain, and how different units move through and interact with the lie of the land, come into play as well. For instance, infantry and spearmen

are able to hide in forests or lie low in tall grassland and launch devastating ambush sorties on unsuspecting opposing forces. The risk is that sometimes flocks of birds or wildlife will be disturbed by your presence and leave the forest or grasses, alerting enemies to your whereabouts. A barrage of fiery arrows from enemy archers could make life unpleasant to say the least for troops caught in a field of grass.

Apart from maybe a few more civilisations, one thing which could have used more variation is the heavy weapon and siege machinery - such as battering rams, scaling ladders, catapults, and ballistas - which are non-specific and available to each of the three sides. Considering that there's an excellent selection of siege-based missions, including a greater variety of weaponry and making certain ones unique to different sides would have given the gameplay that extra level of depth.

Many missions in the 24-stage single player campaign require you to ensure that your commanders or certain VIPs survive. Yet often you'll find commanders and VIPs wandering away from the protection of your troops, making your life even harder. In most missions, enemies seem happy to launch only minor sorties against your forces that are annoying more than decisive. These are just some examples of the slightly inconsistent AI which means that while Praetorians has good longevity, it can be an occasionally frustrating experience. Multiplayer is of course where the real challenge lies, and because the basic gameplay as

a whole is so finely tuned, it is the more rewarding experience.

Praetorians will appeal to strategy fans who want to concentrate purely on commanding troops and winning battles. Even without the added dimension of resource management, there's surprising depth to the game, brought about by the finely tuned and well-balanced gameplay. Like Caesar, Praetorians will soon have you proclaiming, "Veni, Vidi, Vici" That's "I came, I saw, I conquered" for those not quite up to scratch with their Latin.

Derek Lee



Title screen of the month!



All around the watchtower, geddit?

## HAWK EYE

To balance out the terrain capabilities of various units, Praetorians features two different types of scouts. The hawk scout can be sent to briefly spy on enemies from the air, but can only scout for such distance as its stamina allows. The hawks in Praetorians must be some kind of super hawks since they are not susceptible to enemy arrow fire. Then there is the wolf scout which can sniff out enemies hiding in forests that the hawk is unable to see. Furthermore, wolves can be ordered to remain in certain locations so that the fog of war is lifted at these locations and players can spot the approach of enemies. Their disadvantage is that they can be hunted down and slain.



Handsome lads, ugly horses



This looks idyllic. ATTACK!

## RATING



### FOR

Balanced gameplay  
Excellent terrain  
Strong multiplayer

### AGAINST

Only three civilisations  
Inconsistent AI  
Battle animations

## OVERALL

An excellent Rome-flavoured RTS for players who want pure strategy and little else.

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# Project Nomads

Developer: Radon Labs ■ Publisher: CDV ■ Distributor: Red Ant ■ Price: \$79.95 ■ Rating: M15+ ■ Available: Now

## Where too many floating islands are barely enough

**I**n an era where all too many games have a version number after their name it is great to see something that is not only not a sequel, but a highly original concept as well. Project Nomads is just such a truly weird and warped beast. You have never seen a game like this before and you have to give the brains behind Nomads top marks for being unusual, if nothing else.

### The main thrust of the gameplay sees you controlling huge floating islands that are like battleships

#### PROJECT MUSHROOMS

We weren't kidding when we suggested the guys at Radon Labs were into some serious psychedelia. Project Nomads is a very fresh and original idea and it is mighty welcome in the 'me too' climate of game publishing. Even though Nomads has its problems and the game is at times silly and frustrating, buying the game is almost a worthy political statement, if only to encourage publishers to be more inventive. Remember brilliant games like Sacrifice, Battlezone and the clever Freedom Force, as these might be part of a dying breed if we slavishly follow successful formulas from sequel to sequel.

Obviously the mushrooms are pretty darn exotic in the woods around Radon Labs, where this game was spawned, as the main thrust of the gameplay sees you controlling huge floating islands that are like battleships. The game world is set in amongst the remains of a planet which for one reason or another all but disintegrated, leaving huge floating hunks of rock behind. These

often serve as bases for you and your enemies and you can even fit them out with turrets, fighter hangars and engines.

Are you with us so far? In Project Nomads you are a maverick pilot and island controller type and you have to find your two friends who have been captured by a bunch of guys called The Sentinels. Naturally you don't do this alone, instead a rather torpid octogenarian in a huge robe materialises out of thin air and teaches you to use your island fortress and fight off enemies. This guy is called

the Master Builder and your crash landed aircraft wakes the old coot as he slumbers in a magical stasis. Like we said... weird.

#### Get a grip!

However there are some aspects of Nomads that make all of the strangeness worth it. For a start some of the visuals are really going to stay emblazoned on the back of your retina as they are very interesting indeed. The way the many different islands just hang in deep space is hypnotic. You will find it a challenge not to just spend time staring at these massive suspended chunks of earth and wonder how the hell they got there in the first place.

The way the game world slowly changes from night to day is also impressive, especially when the sun and moon move in gradual motion through the island outcrops above and below you.

There are three characters for you to choose from. There is the massive Goliath,

the crotchety old John or the nubile Susie who looks like she has just dropped a few eccies and headed off to a rave, right down to the gossamer-thin angel wings.

The game works like the weird hybrid child of a 3D RTS and a futuristic flight sim. You must

make sure your island is properly protected with turrets, which you place in strategically sound locations. You have to engage your drive motors or man the turrets and there are also light fighter craft at your disposal. Repairs will also be necessary when your installations on the island take damage and you have to make sure you don't crash into an airborne mine or your whole island will disintegrate. You can also use your limited energy reserves to fly a jet powered backpack if you manage to get the hang of the at times erratic controls.

#### It's all about control

Indeed it is this issue which prevents Nomads from being something special as most of the movement and targeting controls are imprecise, hard to live with and sometimes downright annoying.

The worst of these are the turret controls. Firing your turret is essential for



If I knew what this was I could caption it



Gandalf vs Rainbow Brite - fight at eleven



Next stop, Big Day Out



A good idea... shame it doesn't really work

#### SYSTEM

##### NEED

P3-450  
64MB RAM  
32MB Videocard  
400MB HDD

##### WANT

P4 2GHz+  
256MB RAM  
GeForce3  
1GB HDD

##### MULTIPLAYER

Yes

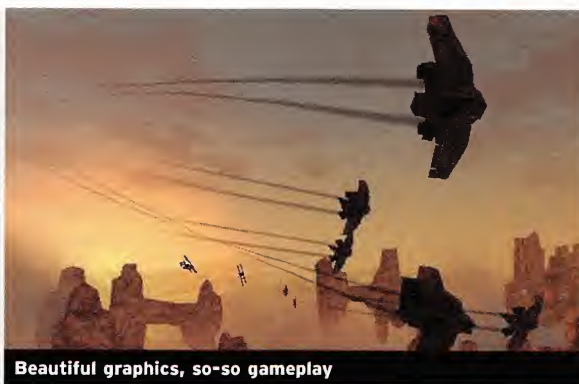
##### ONLINE

[www.nomadsworld.com](http://www.nomadsworld.com)  
Need to get away from this horrible game quickly and cheaply? Then log on to Nomad's World! Get down with giant cockroaches in dingy South African hostels! Become Leonardo in The Beach! Sleep with accented beauties and get weird diseases! It's all fun!





No more drugs for that man



Beautiful graphics, so-so gameplay

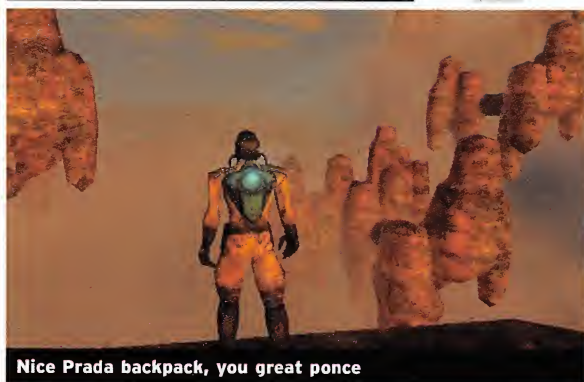
the purpose of knocking out enemy fighters, gun turrets and other threats. Your weapon has a high rate of fire and can be swivelled around quickly enough, however aiming is a pain as the recoil which Radon Labs deemed a necessary effect is so intrusive that it makes aiming a really irritating chore.

You sort of approximate where you want to shoot and the jittery recoil action

then sprays your gunfire in roughly the right direction with the eventual result being that you do destroy your target, but it all takes way too long as your accuracy is seriously impeded. This is a particularly bad situation as you will often need to quickly knock out



This guy will really irritate you



Nice Prada backpack, you great ponce



Any questions?

stationary targets from long range and hitting such threats is only easy when they are close, often too close for comfort.

Your battle spells, which you use when overpowering enemies on foot, enemies which look suspiciously like giant cockroaches, are also quite awkward.

All of these interface foibles detract from what are essentially imaginative ideas and it is big shame as the game is often a chore rather than being fun to play simply because the mechanics aren't up to it. Being a very linear affair doesn't help Project Nomads either. Even though you can move your island about it is essentially a forward or backwards affair with one predetermined path on offer - poo!

## Maze of pain

The levels often also feel like they are not that logically designed and the artists involved were more passionate about the intrinsic beauty of the places they were creating than the fact that it all needs to work as a cohesive game world. There are some bits which are sumptuous and interesting and some areas where it is obvious that you are wandering through what is essentially 'filler space' not really intended to do much more than make the levels feel like they are big enough to be decent value for money.

It is this lack of overall discipline which hurts the game the most as it is obvious that there are some mighty original and potentially intriguing ideas in Project Nomads. However the overall program of game development has not been given enough steerage to help the womb of inspiration give birth to a good game. That said we are keen to see more from Radon Labs especially if their fabulous fungi supply holds out.

Steve Polak

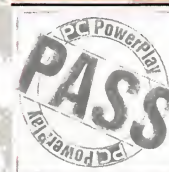


For their rank mediocrity, they must die!

## CRATE STUFF?

The humble box full of explosives should be banned from most games. It seems like whenever a game designer wants to impede your progress, at least until you can fire a weapon at the offending blockage, they simply trot out their favourite party trick the 'amazing exploding box'. Project Nomads has them aplenty too and they are rubbish. Just when you think this game is brimming over with originality you are let down by what you recognise as the obtrusive oversized hand of the game developer meddling with your fun, plonking crates which are marked as containing explosives in key locations all over the level you are exploring. There isn't a more clichéd object you come across regularly in a videogame and we reckon they should be banned immediately before our brains seize up at the stupidity of finding boxes chock full of explosives everywhere. In all sorts of games you find boxes in the middle of lakes, sitting conveniently near doorways, underneath bridges and always near enemies stupid enough to stand guard over them so that you can blast all and sundry into a million bits. The horror must end!

## RATING



## FOR

Original concept  
Slick visuals  
Intriguing story

## AGAINST

Awkward controls  
Overtly linear  
Limited depth

## OVERALL

Awkward controls and lack of substance don't entirely ruin a refreshingly original gameplay experience

63



# War & Peace

Developer: Microids ■ Publisher: Microids ■ Distributor: Red Ant ■ Price: \$89.95 ■ Rating: M15+ ■ Available: Now

## Tolstoy would be spinning in his grave

### SYSTEM

#### NEED

P3-800  
64MB RAM  
16MB Videocard  
800MB HDD

#### WANT

P4 1GHz+  
128MB RAM  
GeForce3  
1GB HDD

#### MULTIPLAYER

Yes

#### ONLINE

www.tolstoy.com  
Trivia factoid of the month! Tolstoy was mad, colour-blind and liked to drink champagne out of a lady's slipper! Is this true? Only the official Leo Tolstoy page can tell you for sure. Full of useful facts!

### RATING



#### FOR

Considerable depth  
Diplomacy mode  
Sense of scale

#### AGAINST

Awful tutorial  
Problematic camera  
Messy combat

### OVERALL

Tried to bite off more than it could chew and nearly choked

61



This is freaking me out...



Massive scope = confusing game



That triangle is eating those tiny men! Help them!



Is it some kind of eyesight test?

**I**t was a time when the political face of Europe was visiting the plastic surgeon of war mighty often. In short it was war, but not as we know it and the late 18th century is the primary focus of this latest wargame.

War and Peace is an ambitious beast. The game lets you fight battles which can encompass nearly two hundred cities, and the surrounding countryside is huge. There are also many different types of troops with the combatants broken down into four main categories: foot soldiers, cavalry, artillery and naval units.

### Fiddly fiddly

But you don't just take charge of your men and march off to battle. Instead you have some economic empire management and diplomatic manoeuvres at your disposal. There are farms to build, towns to develop and you must oversee the climbing of the game's fairly basic technology tree too.

All of this is easy enough to manage once you work it out for yourself, but don't expect the manual or in game tutorial to help you a great deal. The tutorial is really inadequate as it isn't interactive and instead you basically have to watch captured gameplay footage which is explained using captions.

For all of its ambitious beginnings there are some problems with the way this game

tries to present the conflict from an all-encompassing perspective. For a start it can become mighty hard to keep track of which city is focused on doing what, and as a result overall strategic focus can often be something you really have to work hard at keeping on track. This sometimes feels less like fun and more like lots of micromanagement for its own sake.

### Eye of the beholder

The camera control system is annoying in that it uses the landmass as the point of reference and so the viewpoint zooms across the landscape, but doesn't easily allow you to easily focus in on a particular bunch of soldiers. Combat is a mixed affair. You can use formations and it is wise to use cavalry to charge, infantry to defend and guns at the rear of your formations. However battles can start when you aren't looking at a town and so by the time you switch your viewpoint things may have become convoluted to the point where a good sense of troop placement is somewhat irrelevant.

### Talk is cheap

On the positive side of the equation the diplomatic system works well enough and it is fun gathering a group of allies as you try to mercilessly isolate and obliterate a particular nation state. The overarching strategy map also helps you get a sense of how the game world is changing with regions being taken and empires growing or shrinking. However it is certainly a challenge orchestrating large scale strategic moves as you can

easily get bogged down by the minutia of town and battle micromanagement.

Thankfully there is an invisible advisor who lets you know when towns are under attack and your attention is required and for the most part the in game audio is minimalist, but effective. However this is the sort of game you have to work at enjoying and as such is only likely to really appeal to fans of the period.

That said if you do persevere there is a good game hidden under all of this. It is pretty well camouflaged though and the interface and camera control systems do their utmost to make the experience of playing War and Peace something which delivers a mix of frustration and joy.

Steve Polak



Nothing compared to the state of my underpants





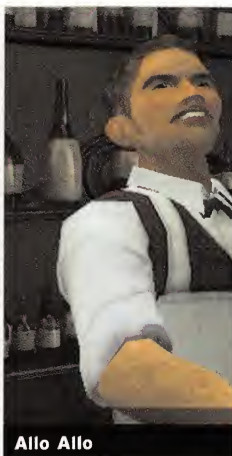
# Post Mortem

Developer: Microïds ■ Publisher: Microïds ■ Distributor: Red Ant ■ Price: \$79.95 ■ Rating: MA15+ ■ Available: Now

## Could sex and murder in Paris possibly be boring?



Clearly a happening place



Allo Allo



**D**etective games have never been my forte, but 'Murder in the Mississippi' managed to keep me glued for months. And that ran in about eight colours on a machine that's strongest asset was its 64K of random access memory. Surely Post Mortem - in all its modern 3D splendour - could keep one spellbound for at least a few hours, right? The opening scene depicting a couple doing the horizontal mambo while some sort of deranged serial killer stalks their hotel room isn't a bad start...

The thing with detective/adventure games, is that graphics don't really matter much. It's the storyline and the game mechanics (i.e. the "gameplay") that really matter. The storyline is fine, but it must be said that Post Mortem's gameplay is left more than a tad wanting.

### Free to decide?

A sense of freedom is a vital asset to any adventure game. The player should feel that they are not simply following a pre-determined plotline to its ultimate conclusion. Post Mortem does feature an interesting plotline, and the player is given certain freedoms, (you can travel around the city at will, and choose exactly what you want to say to the various people you meet) but despite this, the game does feel rather constricting as a whole.

This can be best typified in the fact that the computer characters do not respond realistically to what the player says. For example, while conversing with a hotel bartender, everything was done to prevent him discovering the player was a private investigator (trying to keep a low profile), as I used the option to pretend I was a

personal friend of the murder victims. Great efforts were made to conceal the player's identity and mission, yet, next time the barman was approached, the first thing he said was, "Aren't you on a case?". And that is not the only instance of the AI possessing knowledge they shouldn't. God knows why the developers

even gave the option to feign identity if their AI characters know it anyway.

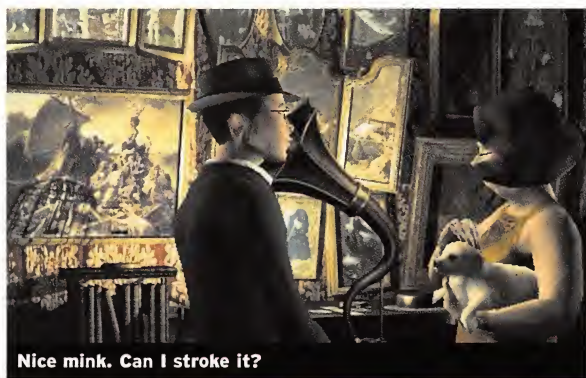
### Computer Illiterates rejoice

Playing Post Mortem is a very simple affair: all that is needed is your mouse. This is a double-edged sword; the simplicity and ease of a point-and-click style of play is very user friendly, but the intricacy of the game suffers as a result. The player's only real options are to walk around and talk to people or use inventory items.

An example of the drawbacks of this point-and-click style of play can be found in the way in which items are utilised. Basically, they cannot be operated unless you are in the place in which they are supposed to be used. Of course, this makes it rather obvious when you are supposed to use certain items, as attempting to use them anywhere else simply results in clicking the mouse button without result.

Despite some drawbacks, Post Mortem may be worth a look for those interested in detective work, or any who are in the market for a simple, user-friendly adventure game.

Victor Webster



Nice mink. Can I stroke it?



Lamplighters form the centre of a bizarre occult conspiracy... not really



You are a policeman? Er... My name is Gus MacPherson, I am an American journalist. I would like to ask you a few questions about the Double case.  
Yes, I said a 'rem'



### TALK TO THE HAND

Conversing with other characters is impressive at first, but soon becomes an unimaginative snatch for information. A typical conversation gives various choices of the exact line to say. The problem is, most conversations work on the basis that you have one line ("Thank you very much, see you later."), which will end the discussion. All the other lines will result in the second party responding, possibly giving you vital information and clues, possibly idle chit-chat, and maybe even blatant lies. However, once you've said everything else, you are only left with the "goodbye" line. As a result, most conversations consist of monotonously going through every possible combination of dialogue, thus gaining as much information as possible, and then moving on to the next scene.

### SYSTEM

#### NEED

P2-350  
64MB RAM  
16MB Videocard  
500MB HDD

#### WANT

P3-450  
64MB RAM  
16MB Videocard  
500MB HDD

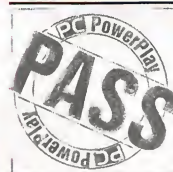
#### MULTIPLAYER

No

#### ONLINE

[www.postmortem-video-game.com](http://www.postmortem-video-game.com).  
An online advertisement for the game. Demo download available. Nuff said.

### RATING



#### FOR

Interesting plotline  
User Friendly  
Atmospheric

#### AGAINST

Limited freedom  
Robotic AI  
Tedious conversation

### OVERALL

Nicely written, user-friendly, but ultimately limited detective adventure.

57



# Raven Shield

Developer: Ubi Soft Canada ■ Publisher: Ubi Soft ■ Distributor: Ubi Soft ■ Price: \$89.95 ■ Rating: MA ■ Available: Now

You've played it out on your own, is it worth getting a LAN together?

## SYSTEM

### NEED

600Mhz+ CPU  
128MB RAM  
32MB Videocard  
2GB HDD

### WANT

Intel P4  
512MB RAM  
32MB Videocard  
2GB HDD

Welcome to the first game in a new section of PCPP - our monthly multiplayer report. So many games are being released with both single- and multiplayer modes, and at the time of the review there may not be any servers up and running for us to test multiplayer. Enter the multiplayer report, where we'll take an in-depth look at the multiplayer modes of the largest releases from previous issues. And what better way to kick it off than with the next big thing in teamplay - Raven Shield.

## CS killer #34?

Since Counter-Strike, a plethora of similar team-based titles have come and gone - America's Army, Operation Flashpoint, Day of Defeat, Rainbow Six, Rogue Spear, Urban Terror and a number of others - each of which arguably features both infinitely better graphics as well as a more realistic physics engine and damage model than the venerable mod for Half-Life. And yet, CS remains the king, owing to its massive user base and established role as game-of-choice for team-based tournament play.

With the recent release of Raven Shield, Ubi Soft has taken yet another crack at breaking the rock-solid Counter-Strike mould, which as we've seen in the past, isn't exactly a walk in the park. Unfortunately, at the time of writing our full review of RS, local multiplayer game servers for the review code were virtually non-existent. However, now that the demo has been made available to the public and there are plenty of servers to play on, it's time to break down Raven Shield's



Oh this is gonna be sweet

multiplayer mode, and find out once and for all if it has what it takes to overthrow the current teamplay FPS king, Counter-Strike.

## Movement and Realism

One of the most common features of all Tom Clancy titles to date has been the primary focus on realistic gameplay, and Raven Shield is certainly no exception. Like Counter-Strike, movement will have varied effects on your accuracy, as shown by the

game's dynamic crosshair. However, movement isn't the only factor that reduces accuracy; taking fire will have an effect, and indeed the game is so sensitive you'll need a steady mouse hand to maintain an edge over your opponents.

This means that a far more tactical approach needs to be taken while playing the game: if you are able to get behind an

Put some clothes on and get down ma'am!

## AUDIO LACKING

One of the most disappointing aspects of the current build of Raven Shield is the fact that its sound effects are near useless from a tactical perspective. In Counter-Strike, skilled players have the ability to pin-point the location of an enemy as far as 300m away using the sound of their footsteps, which give you not only the direction that the enemy is coming from but also how far away they are from you. In Raven Shield, however, footsteps can only be heard clearly when an enemy is very close to you, virtually eliminating the ability to perform any sort of surprise attack unless you have a heartbeat sensor. The same goes for grenades - unless you see them, you won't be able to tell where they're coming from until they explode.

You should have gone before we left!

Put it away, Smith

I luv my gun

Aimbot won't help you now, 133+ haxorboy!



## COMMUNICATION

One of the most impressive features added to Counter-Strike in recent versions is the voice communication utility. Much like a radio, holding down a pre-mapped key and speaking into the microphone allows you to communicate with your team mates way more effectively than a typed message or regular radio command would allow you to do. Unfortunately, since Counter-Strike there haven't been many games at all that include a voice communication feature, and Raven Shield is no exception. That said, there are pre-programmed radio messages that are still quite effective, but advanced tactics have to be typed out on the keyboard.



We've already taken out the trash sir, we did it last night

## Rabbit plague

A significant issue that has recently been rectified in Counter-Strike was the ability for players to bunny hop around the map, or for those not familiar with gaming jargon, jump around like a stoned monkey making it harder for enemies to hit you, while shooting with the same accuracy you had while you were stationary. Seeing the effects this has had on gameplay, Ubi Montreal decided to remove jumping from Raven Shield altogether. Some of you may be thinking that the inability to jump is far worse than bunny hopping; however, you'll find that while playing the game there is rarely a need for a jump key due to Raven Shield's slower pace.

## The Arsenal

While playing the game we found that we were frequently using all of the available gadgets, especially the heartbeat sensor. This is something not seen in many competing FPS titles currently on the market, especially Counter-Strike. How many of you have used the CS nightvision goggles more than once or twice?

Unlike Counter-Strike, money is not a factor in Raven Shield and choosing equipment takes place in a screen just before each round, where you have just under 30 seconds to make any modifications and resume play. Furthermore, there's no limit to the type of equipment you choose, however, there are only a certain number of gear slots available so you will need to fill each of them wisely. Most weapons can be equipped with a silencer, and each gun has a number of different types of bullets to choose from that slightly differ in strength and accuracy. For beginners, the 30 seconds to choose all gear might be a little frustrating at first, however, as you get into the game this process becomes continually faster and you'll be glad that you don't have to sit around any longer between rounds.

## The Verdict

Overall, there is no doubt that Raven Shield is the next big thing in ultra-realistic

## GAME MODES

The multiplayer game features two main modes, "Survival" and "Team Survival" - Survival being regular deathmatch and Team Survival featuring a variety of different parts. These include: Escort the general (rescue the VIP for CS fans), defuse the bomb, hostage rescue, and team deathmatch. This is very similar to the current objective layout seen in Counter-Strike, and it will be interesting to see how well these play when the final version of the game with all these modes available is released.

multiplayer FPS games, however, has it got enough to take the crown from Counter-Strike? Well, it's hard to say really as both games have their own various strengths and weaknesses. Recreational gamers will certainly want to give this game a try, but due to the fact that CS is already established as the main game played at world-wide LAN tournaments and features voice communication, we doubt the professionals will be jumping onto the Tom Clancy bandwagon any time soon.

Asher Moses



## Raven Shield is the next big thing, but has it got enough to take the crown from Counter-Strike?

enemy you'll have a 99% chance of killing them since when they spin around to fire back at you, their recoil will be out of control long enough for you to squeeze off a few final shots.

Before we go any further, allows us to clarify something. Anyone who says that Counter-Strike is a realistic shooter is either: a) lying, or b) hasn't played a Tom Clancy game before - we're guessing the latter. For starters, like in previous Tom Clancy titles, movement speed is affected depending on where you are shot. For example, if you are wounded in the leg or fall off a ladder, your walking speed will decrease quite significantly and you will be limping until the next round begins.

Furthermore, as well as crouching, you are also able to go prone, enabling you to conceal much of your body from enemy view. Of course, the immediate disadvantage to this is that you move much slower while in the prone position - a fair trade off in long range battles, but of little use in close quarters combat.

Another handy movement feature not seen in CS is the ability to peek left and right; this can help you avoid running blindly into enemy gunfire. Of similar use, interaction with objects such as doors is quite amazing, with the player having the ability to specify exactly how far they want the door to open using the mouse's scroll wheel, enabling you to take a sneak peek at what's inside as well as let off a few cheap shots or grenades, knowing that you're being partially covered by the door. As well as this, for those that like to take a more overt approach, frag grenades and shotguns can blow most doors right off their hinges - another advantage of using the Unreal engine.



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**W**as there ever a time without the Internet? The way it's relied on these days it makes you wonder how we got on without it. Indeed, in the present, it's worth wondering how we're getting on with it.

Confused? I'm talking about caps and the plans favoured by ISPs all over Australia that tie up their customers with annoying limitations. Gone are the golden days of unlimited access and now it's a matter of regularly checking usage calculators to ensure you don't go over your limit and end up in the desperately painful "pay zone".

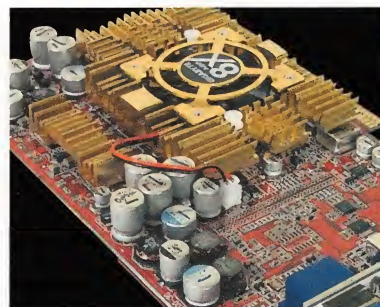
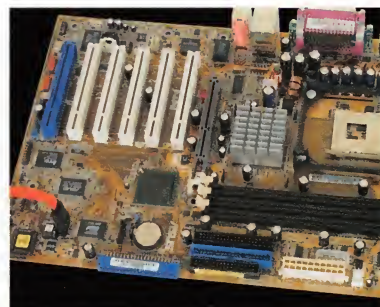
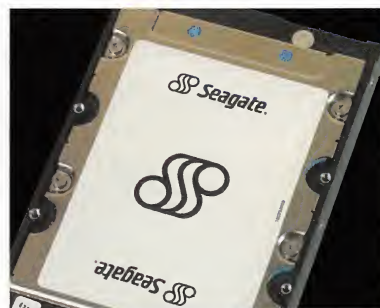
From a gamer's perspective however progress is being made in regard to online gaming. In our investigation of ten ISPs it was encouraging to find that gaming is alive and well in the Australian online community and a number of ISPs are doing a good job supporting it. But not all are and you're bound to be surprised at some of the big players who wouldn't know what Counter Strike was if it burst through the door and held them all captive. Of course to find out who these anti gaming companies are you'll need to read our comprehensive ISP roundup.

After much research it was surprising to find that the Telstra GameArena service was one of the best gaming networks in all of the country with its wide variety of games and myriad of users. The important factor though is that Bigpond, like some other ISPs, are gamer friendly and don't include usage of internal gaming servers towards the overall cap.

This isn't to say that GameArena is perfect and admittedly it has been significantly better recently but as a long time user am constantly frustrated by Telstra's cry of "the service is free and unsupported so too bad if you have any kind of a problem like your favourite server being down for a fortnight". Here's hoping that ISPs catch on to the gold mine that is us gamers and work to make their gaming service a highly supported focal point of their business.

But let's not forget see through goodness. From the wacky world of case modding one of the more intriguing items of tech this month would have to be our Perspex case. Here we all were just getting over black cases and now they want us to cope with clear ones. Oh well, at least when enshrouded in Perspex your computer won't be able to lie to you anymore because it would be, you know, transparent.

**Jere Lawrence**  
jerel@next.com.au



- 90 ISP Powertest
- 96 Asus P4PE  
NTI Backup Deluxe
- 98 Mitsubishi Monitor  
Maya II Radeon 9700
- 99 Modware Clear Case  
Thermaltake Xaser II
- 100 Audiolabs USB  
Creative I-Trigue 3300
- 101 Creative CardCam  
Creative WebCam
- 102 The Beast
- 104 Setup





# EVEN PHATTER PIPES

Our last ISP roundup was way back in PCPP#65, October 2001, so we figured it was time to take another look at Internet access in Australia. Is broadband readily available for all? Are our dialup servers reliable at last? Should anyone in the bush even bother? **Jere Lawrence** and **Andrew Calvin** take a long hard look.

Any of you who were using computers before the revolution of the Internet will probably admit to being caught a little unaware in regard to how quickly the public took to our beloved gargantuan network. The success of the Internet is most likely due to the fact that this medium allows humans to partake in the world's most popular social activity. Which would be communicating. You filthy minded...

Anyway, as gamers we need more than just the ability to look at web pages and being the competitive, over achieving bunch that we are, we need to push the Internet to its limits. And being gamers one of our primary Internet uses is the playing of online games.

## Types of online games

Although we've already gone over this in a previous online gaming feature it's still worth recapping as there are two principal types of online game. Massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs) such as Ultima Online, Everquest and Dark Age of Camelot as well as online shooters such as Counter-Strike, Battlefield 1942 and Unreal Tournament 2003 (plus an honourable mention for Quake 3 Arena).

There's a big difference between these two types of game and what you want out of online gaming can directly dictate the kind of service you need. MMORPGs are ideal for modem users because the methodology used to coordinate client-server data is designed to be so slow that even with high pings (up to 400) these

games are still very playable. Even better, the latency-forgiving nature of MMORPGs also means that playing on a server located in the US is as viable as if you lived there yourself. Actually, if the MMORPG server is located in California it's not uncommon for an Australian to have a better ping than a New York modem user due to the many large data pipes we have across our own east coast of Australia.

## Online Shooters

These types of games realistically require lower than 100ms pings and that means broadband, so if you're a modem user, you certainly don't want to play on a server dominated by broadbanders.

Online shooters are dramatically different to MMORPGs in that your ability to be successful and even hit your target is entirely reliant on your ping and for this reason it is vital to select a server that is local enough to be playable. Luckily, ISPs have caught on to this fact and many now provide a number of dedicated servers that play different games. Counter-Strike is by far the most popular but other titles are offered and what's supported will ultimately come down to the ISP and what servers they have running.

## Broadbands

Broadband services in this country are split into two different types. Cable and ADSL. Cable is the most desired of the broadband services and although its maximum speed is 10MB, available bandwidth is actually shared with everyone on the relevant local exchange. Cable access is currently the fastest consumer level access to the Internet but its biggest problem is that it's only available to a small percentage of the population and many often miss out. The other broadband option is ADSL and as it uses a standard phone line, is at least available to a wider variety of people and even allows for incoming/outgoing calls while connected to the Internet. The problem though is that ISPs price ADSL connections based on the speed and a 256/64 connection is usually cheaper than a faster 512/128 and connection speeds that are comparable with cable access can cost upwards of \$500 a month.

The biggest problem with broadband connections in Australia is that they're capped. What this means is that the amount of data you can send and receive is limited. Telstra, for example, limits its users to only 3GB a month while different carriers may offer 5GB for a similar price. Other factors are also worth considering as there's a difference in the way companies penalise you for going over your limit. Telstra will charge you for every megabyte you're over where Optus will simply

throttle your connection down to 28k.

Modems - Busy signals and disconnects  
Despite the obvious disadvantages a modem has in terms of speed it is still one of the most popular forms of Internet connectivity. This is primarily because a modem provides the cheapest way to get online or alternatively a lack of any kind of broadband connectivity in the area may make it the only option available (although there is some extremely expensive satellite connectivity provided by Telstra).

Because of the slow speed of the modem a user's ability to download large amounts of data becomes severely limited by time and as such a number of ISPs offer unlimited downloads for modem users. The catch though is that modem users are often penalised as to how long they can stay connected. Some ISPs allow you to stay connected for 4 hours while others allow for longer or shorter periods. A definite nuisance, it can be quite frustrating to be fighting in an MMORPG only to hear the painful "click" of a line being disconnected and knowing that when you can eventually log back in your character will be very dead.

## ISPs

We've selected 10 of the top national ISPs and taken a look at their performance, the services they offer, and most particularly their suitability for a demanding gaming user. Dig in!





## optus

[www.optus.com.au](http://www.optus.com.au)  
Broadband Value: 2.5/5

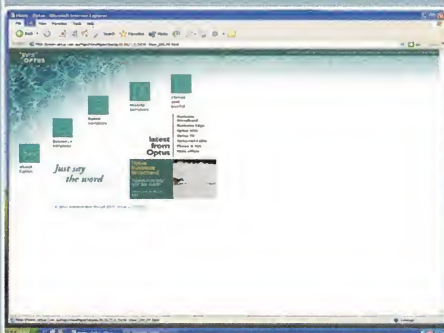
As Australia's only other cable provider the same rules of access apply. That is, if you can get Optus cable TV in your area you can also get Optus Internet. Optus was once the prince of broadband in this country with their unlimited access but those days are long over. For \$69.95 you only get 3GB of data but the sting is lessened by the fact that you don't pay an additional charge over your limit, instead your connection is throttled down to 28k.

The Optus gaming network is extremely comprehensive with 54 games hosted that consist of plenty of Counter-Strike servers as well as modern titles such as UT2003. The absence of a BF1942 server did however seem an oversight. Although Optus cable customers will be able to get great pings to their internal servers, their data will cost them as all traffic counts towards usage.

As for dialup, signing up with Optus modem dialup was a little painful, as we needed to dial in, agree to the terms and conditions, then hang up and wait 20 minutes before dialling again. However, having done that there were no other issues in connecting to Optus. If you use Optus for local and long distance you can achieve a better deal than if you don't, which might sway some users toward Optus.

Dialup users have access to the game servers, but with a 101 ms ping you're going to get whipped by cable users who get 11 ms pings.

Their game pages are helpful and detailed; you can check on the status of the servers quite easily, allowing you to avoid gaming gurus with low pings and high kill rates. In fact, this is a great feature so long as a server full of modem users doesn't have a cable user suddenly descend upon them..



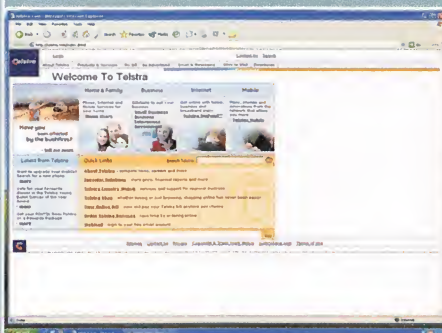
## telstra

[www.bigpond.com](http://www.bigpond.com)  
Broadband value: 4/5

The original Australian cable Internet provider, if you have Foxtel cable TV in your area then you can get Telstra cable Internet access, otherwise you're out of luck. Cable is amazingly fast (up to 450kps) and costs for the service start as low as \$55 for 500MB of data, but the most sensible gaming plan would be 3GB for \$88. Telstra's ADSL 512/128 3GB offering is outright expensive but if you're prepared to make them your default carrier for long distance brings the price 'down' to \$95. GameArena, Telstra's gaming service which requires use of a custom application called COGS is a full featured, highly desirable server farm with approximately 58 game servers and an abundance of users that play on them providing much welcomed variety. Another set of reserved "Gamecreate" servers allow for ladder matches to be played without the need for pre-booking. Although Telstra often refers to its gaming service as "Free and unsupported" it is one of this ISP's best features and even justifies the higher monthly cost. As all their game servers are "cap free", you can play non stop all month and even access unlimited downloads from Telstra's very comprehensive file server.

Telstra has a wide range of options for dialup, but none them appear to allow for unlimited session length, even though the time over a month may be unlimited. As with Optus there is something to be said for bundling your home phone and mobile contracts with your Internet access, but reading the fine print will always be important to make sure the deal works for you.

There are no plans on offer which allow you to stay connected for an unlimited length of time. If you want to have an all Saturday game fest then you'll need to be on one of the top dialup plans. However, the 0198 number means that it's suitable for anyone in Australia.



## ozforces

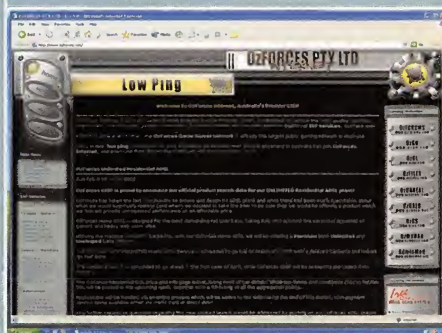
[www.ozforces.com](http://www.ozforces.com)  
Broadband Value: N/A

Referring to itself as a GISP (Gaming ISP), OzForces has made its focus online gaming. Unfortunately no Broadband product is available yet but a quick call confirmed that a very exciting ADSL offering is nearing finalisation. Exciting because the company is planning on rolling out unlimited residential ADSL which although may be a little more expensive than current capped plans should still be affordable enough to make it viable. The best dialup option they provide is the NetForce 3 plan which offers unlimited time and data and ten hours continuous connection for \$33.95.

The OzForces game server farm consists of 62 servers offering support for all the popular online games and according to the company it has the most Counter-Strike servers in the southern hemisphere. The gaming network is open so there is never a shortage of players and a particularly nice touch are a series of "modem only" servers that only allow players with high pings to join. A service similar to Gamecreate allows users to make their own ladders and book servers which they can control from a web interface.

Modem performance was good, once we managed to connect. Almost every single connection took two phone calls, the first always failed and the second always connected (do that 10 times a week and it'll add \$130 to your phone bill). However, I put that down to a dud port on their dialup server.

OzForces dialup was outstanding for two reasons; the very low ping to their game servers (87 ms) and the previously mentioned modem-only servers. Add to that a reasonable range of plans, unlimited sessions/hours/downloads, and an 0198 number and you have a very appealing ISP. However, I called support at 6:45 pm on a Friday to discuss the possible dud dialup port, and although it was during support hours I received a recorded message.







## iPrimus

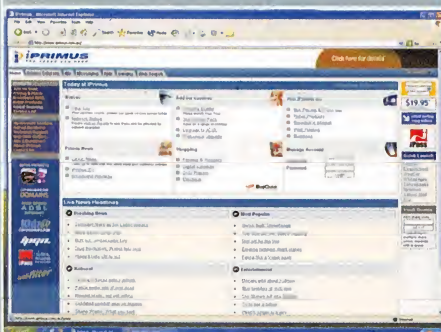
www.iprimus.com.au  
Broadband Value: 1/5

Offering ADSL in many forms, iPrimus' cheapest offering is available at \$50 a month for a 500MB 256/64 connection. The best home consumer offering, the 512 Plan offers 3GB of data per month for \$95. Although the 3GB cap is painfully standard it is simply not good value. We as consumers look to the competition for better deals, not similar ones.

The Gaming network is unfortunately a little dated but Quake 3 fans may find that an appealing factor. With 29 servers and nine of them being Counter-Strike, chances are the average online gamer is going to be satisfied. If however you're looking to play BF1942 or UT2003 it won't be on the iPrimus network. The clincher though is that the data you use playing on their servers is counted in your monthly limit which is just appalling.

As a dialup user there's no data usage charge on most plans, so you can play with a reasonable ping time to your heart's content. It's good that there's a link to the gaming pages on the home page - some ISPs seem to hide them away! The gaming pages have a lot of useful information and links, particularly for those starting out in online gaming. It includes a section on using GameSpy as well as links to useful tools such as Server Query (for finding online games). A dedicated game server for iPrimus users might be useful if you find external servers a bit slow.

Like some other ISPs iPrimus is a partner in the iPass network, which is great for the world traveller. It allows you to use ISPs all over the world - we know a guy who's used it in Florence. All you do is tell the software what country and city you're in and it will offer the best quality ISPs in the area!



## tpg

www.tpg.com.au  
Broadband Value: 3/5

If you happen to have an ABN then TPG is potentially your best friend. One of the only ISPs to offer Unlimited ADSL access the catch is that you have to be a registered business to qualify for the service. Still, TPG has some very good offers available for home consumers but only if you're prepared to put up with 256/64 speeds.

Don't be fooled by the strange marketing blurb, the first MB free/next 400MB charged at 15c then next 10GB free is a complex means of charging low usage users but the 10GB is certainly not to be sneezed at. When you do the math, considering that the average gamer will certainly use more than 400MB per month, TPG are basically offering 10.4GB per month at 256/64 for \$85.

TPG has a small gaming presence which features 6 local servers 2 of them being Counter-Strike. Using these servers, except for their low ping is however irrelevant though as TPG counts data to their servers in your monthly usage.

Modem Modem users might struggle a bit with TPG. The pings to both local and international servers were the slowest in this roundup, although pings aren't the whole story to Internet connectivity. There is a good mix of plans available and reasonably helpful set of web pages, but no plan that allows more than a four hour session. The workaround is, of course, to just reconnect after you take the chance to pat the cat, go to the bathroom, wash your hands, and eat (in that order). Nightowls might appreciate the free access between 0100h and 0700h.

TPG, like many other ISPs, has an installation CD, but most of you will be satisfied with a username, password and telephone and just cranking up the network wizard. I find that using install CDs is often fraught with danger, particularly when you take care to always have the most current browser and O/S patches and a CD tries to overwrite them.



## ihug

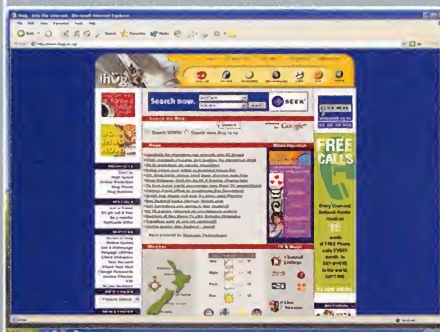
www.ihug.com.au  
Broadband value: 3.5/5

Now we're getting somewhere. iHug's best ADSL offering is actually at the standard \$89.95 price point but offers 1GB more data than most other telcos at a speed of 512/128. Ok, so there's certainly more room for improvement in regard to caps but it's a start. For rural or really unlucky city folk, iHug is also offering a satellite service. A little restrictive, the Ultra 300 plan allows for 300 hours of access with a 2GB cap for \$59.95. Considering that on average this gives 10 hours of access a day, it's pretty good value.

Having only nine servers, the iHug game network is a little light but at least some modern games like Neverwinter Nights and BF1942 are supported. Of course there's a Counter-Strike server (three actually) which just so happens to also be the most popular game, what a surprise. In iHug's favour is that you get unlimited access to their gaming servers. Now if they could just add a few more.

iHug's ping times were more or less as good as you might expect from dialup, even though the connect speed was the lowest (marginally). We didn't suffer any particular connection issues or dropouts (in fact, no ISP exhibited dropout problems, yay for progress!). There are four plans available and you should check the conditions, as there are \$19.95 setup fees on all plans, as well as statement fees if you don't have automatic payment arrangements. One major offering is virus and spam protection on all plans, and if you're like me, spam filtering is a must.

The usual additions of email and web space are available on all plans, but you should check to see if there is a local point of presence, as it focuses on major cities from Brisbane down the coast to Adelaide.





# OZEMAIL

## ozemail

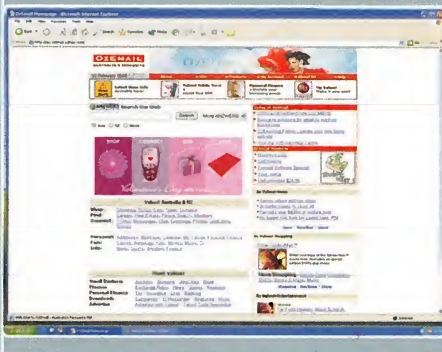
www.ozemail.com.au  
Broadband value: 2/5

Considering the size of Ozemail it's quite surprising that this venerable ISP isn't being a lot more competitive in regard to a broadband service. The basic 512/128 3GB capped account rings in at \$95 which isn't good value when compared to other ISPs offerings. Perhaps the best value connection that Ozemail has, which is really only applicable to those wanting very fast transfer speeds is the 1500/256 3GB capped connection on offer for \$159.00. Overall though, Ozemail Broadband lacks value.

Worse still is that Ozemail has zero, that's right, count 'em, zero gaming servers and have no plans to add any in the future. This rather negates my ability to comment further, so I won't. In short, Ozemail does not represent good value to gamers.

Ozemail is a member of the iPass network (see iPrimus), making it useful for the international traveller who doesn't like Internet cafes. Ozemail has been around for quite some time and has an impressive number of points of presence, but no 13 or 0198 number (for those who are interested, the 0198 prefix was allocated by the Australian Communications Authority to data numbers at a low, usually local call, price).

The web site offers setup information for all flavours of Windows and some versions of Mac OS (but not OS X). The longest session on offer is 6 hours (how large is your bladder?). As a recent convert to cable Internet it's nice to know that session limits don't apply to me anymore, but I feel for you all out there in modem land...



## iinet

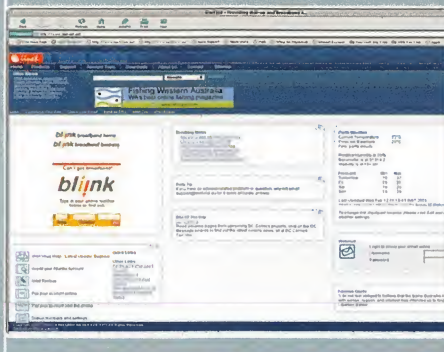
www.iinet.com.au  
Broadband Value: 4/5

Praise is certainly deserved for iinet, as the company offers a 512/128 ADSL connection with 6GB of data for \$80 a month. This represents highly competitive pricing with around double the amount of data. Even better, once you reach your limit, instead of charging per MB over the limit, iinet simply throttles you down to 72k - still better than a modem. Also affordable is the 1500/256 connection with 8GB of data for \$149. Large caps with no penalties that will harm your back pocket make the iinet Blink ADSL accounts well worth considering.

Another ISP sporting a healthy game server farm, iinet hosts 41 games such as BF1942, Counter-Strike, Neverwinter Nights and Quake 3. One server is reserved for users to book ladder matches so this ISP can also provide for some healthy competition. Providing you're on the Blink account all data to their game servers doesn't count towards your monthly limit. Even better, if you breach your cap and are throttled down to 72k, you still get your connection's full speed to the gaming servers. These guys are good.

Modem performance is pretty good, but you're going to get trashed by the broadband users. Modem ping times were as good as any, but taking ten times longer to point and shoot is going to leave your virtual body smoking with a hole where you don't need it.

Although iinet is run by sandgropers (Western Australians for you young 'uns), that doesn't appear to be a problem for East coasters. The usage page is pretty smooth and there's detail on connection settings for every flavour of Windows and Mac OS. Even Red Hat Linux gets the treatment for both dialup and ADSL, so all you alternative OS users out might find this is the place to go for help.



## netspace

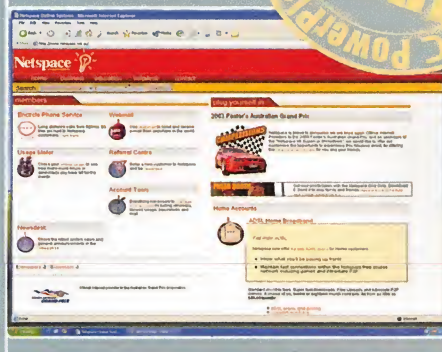
www.netspace.net.au  
Broadband Value: 4.5/5

Offering some truly competitive value, Netspace has a very attractive ADSL offering. Its best plan, the Home 512 offers a glorious 11.5GB total a month. Well actually, it's not quite that simple as Netspace measures usage in terms of peak and off-peak times. The Home 512 account is actually split into 4.5GB of peak data and 7GB of off-peak data. Although this charging methodology is potentially contentious I'm confident enough in my gaming brethren that they will be able to schedule their downloaders to do their thing between the off-peak hours of midnight to 7AM.

The Netspace game server farm is of a good size with 29 different servers to connect to. The range of games is good and there's plenty of modern games such as BF1942, UT2003 and of course Counter-Strike. Thankfully all data to the internal gaming servers does not count towards your monthly limit which makes Netspace one of the most attractive Broadband providers in Australia.

The average game freak has, of course, a small stomach and a huge bladder. Netspace caters for this by having plans with no download, time or session limits, but they may not be the best deal. In addition, connection fees apply (compare this with Telstra where you can sign up without a connection fee and with one month access free!) so factor this into your thinking. The \$22 per month plan seems to be the best offer providing you have a four hour bladder.

The 0198 access number means that if you don't live near a POP it will still be a cheap call. However, Netspace doesn't spell out what that call will exactly cost you. This is something you should take up with your telephone carrier.







# pacific internet

[www.pacific.net.au](http://www.pacific.net.au)

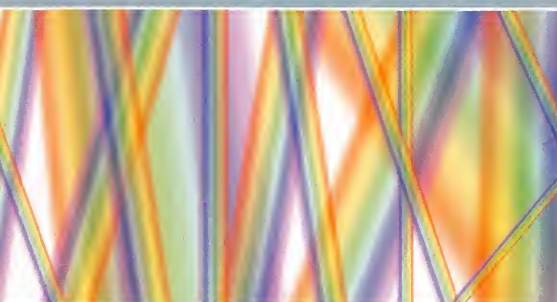
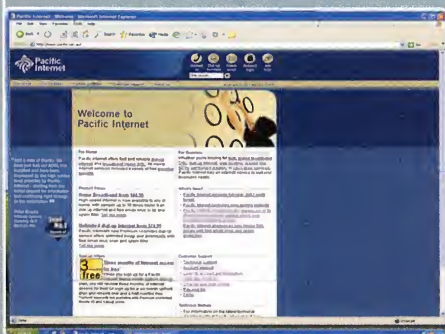
Broadband Value: 2/5

Using ADSL for their broadband offering, Pacific Internet doesn't really make any great efforts to compete. Their Home DSL 512, 3GB, 512/128 offering for \$90 is very ordinary. However, 5GB at 1500/256 for \$150 is a step in the right direction but it would be nice to see 6GB and 10GB caps offered as a more realistic incentive to entice users from the two big players.

The gaming service is of an average size and features 10 servers and offers only Counter-Strike, Half-Life, Quake 3 and Neverwinter Nights. At least data to their gaming servers isn't counted as usage so if you're happy with the selection of games, you could play all month hassle free.

Again, dialup users will find that Pacific Internet offers speeds that are as good as anyone. There is no 1300 or 0198 number, so you'll probably want to confirm that you have local call access before signing up. It's largely east coast oriented, although there is an Adelaide POP as well.

Long term clients will appreciate the virus and spam filtering. I now have a personally registered domain which receives virtually no spam, but my Hotmail account receives 80 per day. Once your email gets out on the internet you should expect to receive a lot of rubbish. Spam filtering by your ISP is going to become a deciding factor for many users within the next two years. Still, it's worth bearing in mind that these days you'll want to separate your email address out from your ISP so that you can churn providers when you wish.



	Connection Speed	Ping to local servers	Ping to USA	Gaming Support	Modem Only Game Servers	Unlimited Time Available	Unlimited Session Length	Unlimited Download	Connection Issues	13 or 0198 numbers
iHug	95	110	260	Good	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
inet	97	109	265	Good	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
iPrimus	97	120	250	Good	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Netscape	96	109	266	Excellent	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Optus	97	101	266	Excellent	No	Yes	No	Yes	iHug	Yes
Oz Forces	97	87	241	Excellent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	iHug	Yes
Ozemail	97	89	260	N/A	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
Pacific Internet	97	101	271	Good	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Telstra Bigpond	97	110	297	Excellent	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
TPG	97	168	330	Average	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No



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- Maxtor® 60Gb UATA133 7200 RPM IDE Hard Disk Drive • 1.44Mb Floppy Disk Drive
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EVERYTHING CONNECTED



## Asus P4PE

■ Price: \$359 ■ Distributor: Achieva ■ URL: [www.achieve.com.au](http://www.achieve.com.au) ■ Phone: 02 9742 3288

With Intel's advent of Hyper Threading which utilises the PE chipset (fully discussed in issue 82) it's now time to take a look at the Asus offering. Their PE motherboard, conveniently called the Asus P4PE is made for socket 478 P4B CPUs. It features 4 AGP, 6 PCI, 3 DIMM sockets, 2 ATA100 IDE connectors, 1 ATA 133 RAID port, Gigabit Ethernet, 4 USB 2.0, 1 IEEE1394, 2 Serial ATA connectors and ADI19860 6-channel on-board audio.

Board layout is reasonable but not perfect as the DIMM sockets are way too close to the AGP slot. When installing you're going to need to seat the memory before the videocard as any installed AGP videocard, irrespective of brand, completely negates your ability to open the left retention clips. On the more positive side though, the inclusion of a 12V standard 5.25" power connector will allow people with older power supplies to use this board without requiring an ATX power header.

The P4PE has an extremely

comprehensive Award BIOS that allows you to control both CPU and memory speeds. Even if you're a novice and screw it up, a new feature called CPU Parameter Recall (CPR, \*groan\*) automatically restores the BIOS if the machine can't boot. But the best new BIOS addition would have to be the Asus live update feature that works IN WINDOWS. Finally, no more having to flash in DOS.

An overclocker's dream, the FSB can be increased in 1MHz increments all the way to 200MHz. CPU voltage can be upped to 1.85v, DDR to 2.9v and AGP voltage can be raised to 1.7v. There are also a number of memory overclocking functions that allows you to use DDR433 memory and above, or alternatively, native asynchronous DDR333 memory support allows for completely independent, wait state free access to memory all the time. Of course it wouldn't be a PE board unless there was Hyper Threading support which in BIOS can be conveniently turned on or off.

Jere Lawrence



### 3D Mark 2001SE @ 1024x768 - R9700

Intel D845PEBT2 :								13549
Asus P4PE :								13528
00000	1750	3500	5250	7000	8750	10500	12250	14000

## NTI Backup Now Deluxe!

■ Price: \$99 ■ Distributor: Harvey Norman ■ URL: [www.quadtel.com](http://www.quadtel.com) ■ Phone: 02 9201 6111

As operating systems become more and more complicated and the end user is expected to stay away from system files there becomes a very real need to make a comprehensive backup. From registry entries to obscure locations for pertinent application files, having to reinstall your OS, particularly Windows 2000/XP, can be a difficult and time consuming task. Something that NTI are trying to save you the hassle of with their backup deluxe software.

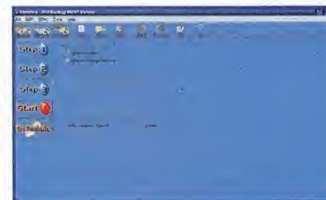
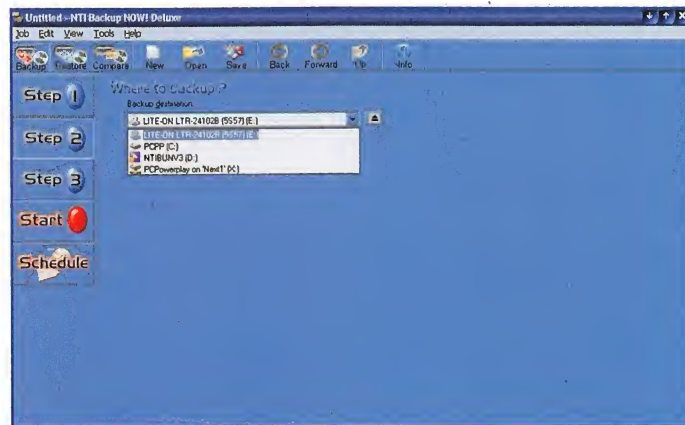
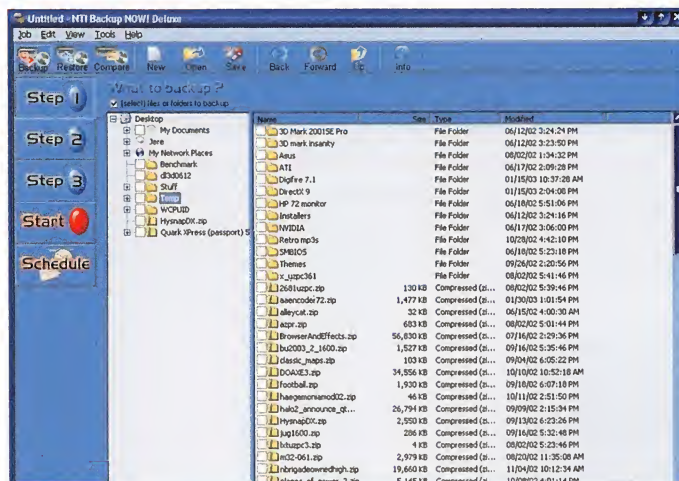
Looking like CD burning software, the NTI backup interface is intuitive and easy to understand as a handy clickable list box sits next to each file or folder. Selecting what you want to backup is as easy as clicking but it's the other more advanced functions that make this software worthy of note.

Offering numerous backup options the software allows for the transfer of files to different formats including: CD, all types of DVD (-R, -RW, -RAM), external hard disks, MO and Zip/Jazz drives. The format of prime importance though would have to be DVD support given its ability to store 4.7GB of data. Drive spanning, a process that allows you to backup your entire system to multiple CDs/DVDs is an excellent function for comprehensive backups but in the case of DVD could be quite costly as a 5 pack will cost around \$65.

Requiring only an initial outlay of cash though after the first comprehensive backup, incremental backups are media independent and can be done on CD's, Zip/Jazz disks, whatever you want.

All the other kind of features you would expect from quality backup software is also there. Automatic media spanning allows for large file systems to be backed up onto multiple disks (DVD or CD) and password protection insures that your backup is safe from prying eyes. The bootable CD and Floppy creator was also rather impressive as the ability to make a master bootable CD with every utility you can think of crammed onto it is a support persons dream.

Jere Lawrence



NTI

Easy to use with supported media plus nice bonuses such as the bootable CD maker. A worthy product.

86



# hot sound



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or call (02) 9972 3711



## Mitsubishi Diamond Pro 2070sb

■ Price: \$2249 ■ Distributor: Todaytech ■ URL: [www.todaytech.com.au](http://www.todaytech.com.au) ■ Phone: 02 9737 8118

Everything you could possibly want in a monitor is available in Mitsubishi's impressive 22" offering. Encased in black the 2070sb looks ideal when coupled with a black keyboard/case. But even if your world is still beige, the lightly coloured front flushing ensures that this monitor will fit in. And with a 20" viewable area, this is one peripheral many will want.

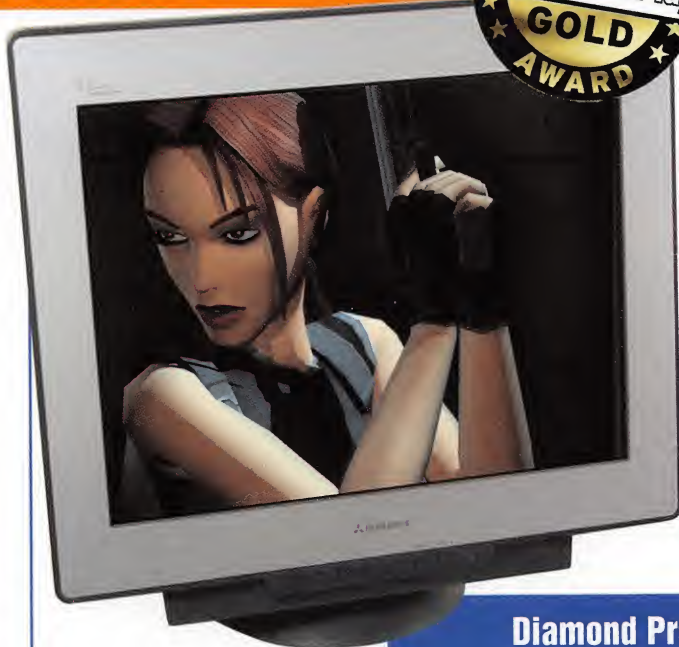
The 2070sb has an auto scanning horizontal frequency range of 30-140 kHz, a vertical frequency range of 50-160 Hz and a maximum resolution of 2048 x 1536 @ 86 Hz. Chock full of external inputs, the 2070sb has 4 USB ports, 2 video inputs so you can share one monitor between two computers as well as power your devices.

The front panel controls are extremely comprehensive and use the standard pop up overlay menu for configuration. More functions than can be listed here, the range of changes that can be made to the picture is comprehensive and you can tweak the image until your eyes bleed. All the basics plus some new and exotic ones such as basic convergence which allows for the aligning of RGB pixels and GlobalSync controls which

eliminate picture impurities that may result from the earth's magnetic field. Unfortunately, a much touted feature, the auto adjust function didn't quite work to expectation and although it made a straight, square image, didn't come near enough to the flushing but instead sat 15mm from the edge.

Performance was exemplary and three different tests confirmed the greatness of this monitor. Of particular note, there were no moire problems despite some extremely fine grids that the testing software threw at it. The clinker though was the High Voltage regulation test which despite a solid white bar being flashed did not cause any kind of banding except perhaps a very minor, "did I actually see that" discrepancy. The super bright functions were also very useful; intended for high colour applications such as games, with the touch of a button you can greatly enhance an image's colour and brightness; all without turning black into a sickly grey. An awesome high performance monitor that's thoroughly recommended but for obvious reasons, will be expensive.

Jere Lawrence



**Diamond Pro**

Extremely accurate and clear picture, plenty of image functions. If you can afford it, get it.

**93**

## Gigabyte Maya II Radeon 9700 Pro

■ Price: \$788 ■ Distributor: TechBuy ■ URL: [www.techbuy.com.au](http://www.techbuy.com.au) ■ Phone: 02 9648 1818

The extremely impressive Radeon 9700 was comprehensively covered in our Issue 80 feature but it still pays to examine the different 9700 offerings from other companies. In regard to hardware and chipset, the Maya II uses the powerful R300 ATI GPU and is clocked at the default core speed of 275Mhz with a memory speed of 550Mhz. The GPU is covered by a large golden coloured HSF and is very quiet. A pleasant bonus, the memory has heat sinks on them so RAM overclocking is a very real possibility by about 15%. The fan on the GPU however is a little small for any significant overclocking in that department.

Shipping with 128MB of DDR memory the Maya II is capable of holding huge amounts of textures and because it utilises AGP 8x can transfer them at twice the speed. Still, it won't be until vertex, pixel shader and texture information is effectively doubled until the real benefits of AGP 8x will be seen. Other items of note are a DVI interface for LCD monitors, TV (RCA) out and with a maximum resolution of 2048 x 1536 could be coupled quite effectively with the 22" Mitsubishi monitor, though only at 60Hz.

In regard to performance, this card

is fast, if not the fastest in the world, particularly when using the new ATI catalyst 3.0 drivers which significantly increased the 3D mark. But it's the new line of DirectX 9 demos that demonstrate why the R9700 is so incredibly desirable. From immaculately rendered fur on a bear to reflective spheres (think pinballs) that refract in real time, the R9700 puts on a visual treat that really wows the senses. The most amazing demo though, Animusic, features a series of launched metallic spheres that fall on strings, drums, piano keys and symbols to make an extremely pleasant tune. It's a demo that tries to defy description but with its vertex shader assisted polygonal animation, accurate shadows, motion blurring and incredible pace this demo had everyone in the office lusting for a killer DirectX 9 game.

Well priced, the Maya II has a trump card up its sleeve over the opposition in regard to software bundle and ships with PowerDVD, Serious Sam, Heavy Metal FAKK 2, Rune, Motocross Mania, 4x4 EVO and Oni. Although these games are hardly new, there are at least two classics there in the form of Heavy Metal and Serious Sam. Full DirectX 9 compatibility and amazing performance make the Maya II/R9700 a highly enviable purchase.

Jere Lawrence



**Maya II**

Excellent performance, lots of bundled software and a low price has the Maya II placed very competitively.

**92**

### UT2003 Flyby @ 1024x768x32

Sapphire R9700:									195.8
Gigabyte Maya II:									181.32
GeForce4 Ti4600:									174.2
000	25	50	75	100	125	150	175	200	

### UT2003 Botmatch @ 1024x768x32

Sapphire R9700:										65.4
Gigabyte Maya II:										66.65
GeForce 4 Ti4600:										66.2
00	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80		



# Modware Clear Perspex Case



■ Price: \$249 ■ Distributor: PC Case Gear ■ URL: [www.pccasegear.com.au](http://www.pccasegear.com.au) ■ Phone: 02 9568 0932

Initially described to me as requiring "some assembly", upon arrival it was soon discovered that "some assembly" actually means putting the entire case together from scratch. This doesn't mean that the Modware case is beyond you, basically, if you can use a screwdriver you can build this product but expect it to take approximately two hours.

Installation isn't really that hard but the bundled instructions aren't what could be described as comprehensive. Despite the obviously translated text, the documentation is a little vague but as each step of construction is clearly photographed, it's always possible to follow the procedure. Actually, one aspect of the documentation is exemplary. Each type of screw and part is individually bagged and given a number which allows the manual to correctly and easily reference each part, you have to try hard to make a mistake.

Included in the kit is everything you need to build a case. All the Perspex pieces are provided along with screws, front panel, switches, face plates and even a pair of white

cloth gloves so you don't get the case dirty and smeary when assembling it. Entirely comprehensive, the kit includes everything you need and the case can be completed with no need to worry about buying any additional pieces at all.

Measuring in at 45cm tall x 22cm wide x 48cm deep, its dimensions are standard for a normal mid size generic case. Four vents allow for fans to be mounted, but you'll have to use self tapping screws to install them. Of course the big plus is that being Perspex, there are no sharp edges or corners to cut yourself on. Even the normally evil ATX back plate was a lot less sharp than other offerings.

Looking quite smart and ideal for decking out with an obscene number of coloured lights, the Modware Perspex case is quite fun to build and gives you the kind of satisfaction that you can only get from an "I made it" project. The only warning that should be given is that Perspex does not provide any EMI shielding and therefore sensitive devices should not be placed to close to the system.

**Jere Lawrence**



## Perspex Case

Fun to build, looks great and when decked out with lots of pretty lights, is something to behold.

92

# Thermaltake Xaser II case

■ Price: \$240 ■ Distributor: PC Case Gear ■ URL: [www.pccasegear.com.au](http://www.pccasegear.com.au) ■ Phone: 02 9568 0932

Expecting a wholly unique and individual case by Thermaltake, the people who bring us numerous HSF and fan controller solutions, it was a little disappointing to discover that the Xaser II is just a heavily modded Antec case with additional features not unlike our Matrix PC.

The main area of modification is the drive bay door which Thermaltake have completely replaced. It's goodbye to the plastic Antec door and hello to a new solid metal alloy one. Using metal hinges, the heavy door is mounted securely and prominently features a red metal alloy back with an "X" shaped black metal piece screwed to it to give the Xaser II name more prominence. The top of the door has had a 5.25" sized cut made into it which allows for the included fan speed controller, LCD temperature sensor and firewire/2 USB ports to always be accessible, even when the door is closed.

Mounted into the top 5.25" bay, the module features a fan controller with a switch that allows for three different speeds, high, medium or low and is primarily intended for use with the CPU fan. The temperature gauge is visible from the middle of the module and when the machine is on, collects data via a USB connector from the SMB (system management bus) to read

the temperature. Being battery backed, when the machine is turned off will also display the overall ambient temperature.

Value added extras include five fans that are orange in colour and are pre-mounted and ready for use. The side panel is the final recipient of some modage and basically features a zig-zag like pattern and the Thermaltake name emblazoned across the bottom. If you'd prefer a clear side panel though, this is available with the Thermaltake logo stuck on or alternatively you could just get a completely clear panel like what is used on the Matrix PC.

Measuring in at 50cm tall x 21cm wide x 45cm deep this is your standard server sized Antec case with nicely rounded edges and drive bays that can be removed with the flick of a lever. Ultimately, this case is cheaper than doing it yourself and the addition of five fans plug an LCD Module for only \$100 more than a standard case does represent good value.

**Jere Lawrence**

## Thermaltake Xaser II

A standard case with Thermaltake modifications, five fans and an LCD module for a reasonable price.

83





## Audio Labs USB Cinema XP

■ Price: \$189.95 ■ Distributor: Audion Australia ■ URL: [www.audion-mm.com.au](http://www.audion-mm.com.au) ■ Phone: 1300 300 364

USB sound cards are by no means a new concept, with many manufacturers including Microsoft and Altec Lansing releasing plenty of portable sound card solutions in the past. However, until the relatively recent release of Creative's Soundblaster Extigy, they've never really taken off in the enthusiast/gaming market at all. This is because, nine times out of ten, the sound quality they've offered is, to put it bluntly, simply poor.

Looking to change all this, Audio Labs have recently announced their latest product, the USB Cinema XP. Based around the USB 1.1 specification, this device should be compatible with just about every modern PC out there. Furthermore, being external, those that are new to computers will not need to tool around inside their PC to install the card due to its handy plug and play ability, and its small foot print means that it will fit in just about any environment you choose.

That said, as far as sound quality goes, taking into account the

support for 6-channel 24-bit surround sound and a sampling rate of up to 96kHz, we can't help but be slightly disappointed with the cinema XP. Although of a much higher standard than the regular AC97 audio found on many motherboards, the card still sits quite far behind the likes of PCI solutions including the SoundBlaster Live/Audigy, as well as its main external competitor, the Soundblaster Extigy. Among the card's noticeable issues is the fact that the six channels are nowhere near as distinctive as they should be, as well as weak bass response and an overall sound reproduction that was unfortunately not as lively as we'd hoped.

The bottom line is, if you're looking specifically for a cheap USB sound card for general windows applications and the occasional DVD, the Cinema XP does the job nicely. However, everyone else will find that a cheaper PCI solution is a much more logical purchase.

Asher Moses



### USB Cinema XP

A convenient, easy to install device let 22down by poor sound quality.

# 50

## Creative I-Trigue 3300

■ Price: Around \$200 ■ Distributor: Achieva ■ URL: [www.achieva.com.au](http://www.achieva.com.au) ■ Phone: 02 9742 3288



It's always exciting to receive a new Creative Labs audio product for review, as you know it's going to either provide awesome sound quality, great value, or both. Unsurprisingly, Creative's latest 2.1 speaker offering, the I-Trigue 3300 is no exception, featuring a sleek black and silver design that is sure to stand out from the rest of the junk you've got scattered around your computer table, as well as an awesomely low price that is likely turn more than just a few heads at the local Electronics Boutique or Harvey Norman. However, how does it perform? More on that later.

Installation of the unit was completed with relative ease, with the two aluminium satellite speakers

plugging directly into the subwoofer, which then connects to your PC. For added convenience, the unit is bundled with a small remote control that allows for quick adjustments of bass and volume levels, as well as a handy headphone jack.

The rather large subwoofer is powered by a decent 6.5 inch driver, allowing for smooth, deep bass production. While it's not exactly ground-shaking, it's important to note that the I-Trigue is not being marketed as a high-end home theatre setup, but rather as a simple desktop sound system for gamers, music listeners and occasional DVD watchers alike. Keeping this in mind, the I-Trigue's volume levels are quite pleasing, if slightly muffled



### I-Trigue 3300

Awesome performance at a low price. Recommended.

# 87

#### Quick Specs

- Connectors: Analog Front In
- Power Source: 13.5Vac, 5Amp
- (H x W x D - cm): Sat - 4.4 x 8.4 x 21, Subwoofer - 24.5 x 26.5 x 24.2
- Speakers Rated Power: Satellites - 9W per channel (2 channels), Subwoofer - 25W
- Frequency Response: 30Hz-20kHz
- With: Audio Cable - Power Adaptor - Quick Start Guide - Remote control

at extremely high levels. At mid-low volume levels though, the I-Trigue's sound output is crystal clear, which is very surprising considering the low cost of the setup.

Furthermore, while music playback is the I-Trigue's strong point, both DVDs and Games sound great, if not slightly lacking in atmosphere due to the meager 2.1 channel support. That said, this is to be expected from all 2.1 setups, not just the I-Trigue.

Overall, if you're looking for a new speaker system but are on a tight budget, we have no trouble recommending Creative's I-Trigue 3300 2.1 system. Nothing we've tested in the same price bracket comes close to matching its performance.

Asher Moses



# Creative CardCam

■ Price: \$199 ■ Distributor: Creative Australia ■ URL: <http://australia.creative.com> ■ Phone: 02 9666 6100

**A**ppropriately named, the Creative Cardcam which measures in at 85mm wide by 55mm high is exactly the same size as a credit card. Well, that's until you get to the depth. Being a very respectable 5mm thin and very light, this remarkably tiny camera still manages to fit quite comfortably in a standard sized wallet.

The camera can take 26 pictures at 1280 x 960 or 101 at 640 x 480 but unfortunately, irrespective of the resolution, the quality of photograph is quite poor. In order to get a reasonable photo you need a lot of light as there's no kind of flash which can make internal photography tricky. You'll also need a pretty steady hand as lack of an auto focus means the slightest jitter will blur your picture.

That's not to say there isn't a market for the device, only that the uses are limited. Basically you're not

going to want to use it for memorable happy snaps, but rather as a documentation tool such as if you were shopping for a new car or comparing houses. Being so easily portable it would also be quite handy in the event of a car accident as a quick and easy means of documenting damage and license plate numbers etc.

Taking pictures with the camera is extremely easy. The on switch pops out the tiny lens and it's really just a matter of pointing and clicking. On the back of the device, two buttons allow for the silencing of the beep that indicates a picture has been taken and another button toggles picture resolution and the deleting of last and all pictures. Using USB to transfer its data, images download extremely fast and as it draws power from the USB port, there's no need to plug a transformer in.

**Jere Lawrence**



Here are some photos we took with the Cardcam.



## Creative CardCam

Not ideal for happy snaps but is highly effective when used as a business or comparison tool.

**75**

# Creative WebCam

■ Price: \$129 ■ Distributor: Creative Australia ■ URL: <http://australia.creative.com> ■ Phone: 02 9666 6100

**A**nother from Creative's "let's make it really small department", the Web Cam mobile is an amazingly tiny web cam that is fully functional and incredibly light. Measuring in at 35mm wide, 25mm tall, 10mm deep and weighing approximately 25 grams there's certainly no doubt that this little camera will present no hassles when going mobile.

Designed specifically to attach to the top of a laptop's screen, with a bit of imagination it's not too hard to convert this to a desktop device and I had it resting stably and comfortably on the edge of a CD case. Just open it a little so that the case will stand upright and "Hey, Presto", a jury rigged solution.

A USB device, installing the web cam is easy but you have to make sure that the device is plugged into a root USB port (i.e. from the back of your machine) and not from a keyboard hub. This aspect is a little unfortunate as the cable which is attached to the camera can't be disconnected and at only 1 metre in

length is rather restrictive. This however can be alleviated by purchasing the Web Cam Pro instead for the same price which has a longer USB cable and a stand to make desktop usage easier.

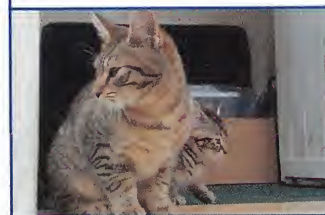
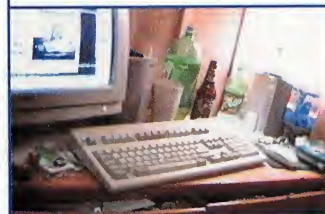
Able to capture at resolutions from 160 x 120 to 640 x 480 both as stills and realtime video, the web cam mobile can transfer some nicely high res imagery, but for anything above 320 x 200 you will need a broadband connection. The camera despite its small size performed remarkably well and as you can see from the test screenshots, offers very competitive image quality.

The bundled software was however a little disappointing. Although the drivers installed effortlessly, even after 3 reinstalls, the Creative bundled applications would crash when trying to start them. Luckily all the camera settings could be changed from the Windows hardware manager and Netmeeting/CUSeeMe saw the camera and utilised it without a problem.

**Jere Lawrence**



Here are some photos we took with the Webcam.



## Creative WebCam

Good image quality and easy to use. Ideal for laptop users or handy for those with limited space.

**82**





# THE BEAST

## THE MOST POWERFUL GAMING PC GOOD MONEY CAN BUY

Another month of big changes, the first explanation must be in regard to the beastie. Ok, so the budget was broken by about \$29 but considering that it's now fully DirectX 9 capable, I think you'll agree it's worth it. For the beast, Serial ATA has finally emerged and thanks to Adaptec, there are RAID ready controllers. Half a terabyte of storage, now that's beastly.

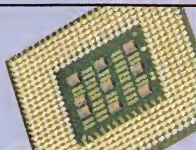


### CPU, MEMORY AND MOTHERBOARD

#### Intel Pentium 4 3.06Ghz (With Hyper Threading)

By doubling the number of controllers inside the chip, the P43.06Ghz can process two threads in hardware at the same time. The coolest thing is that the CPU usage now shows two charts, just like in Symmetric multiprocessor systems.

\$1456 [www.achieva.com.au](http://www.achieva.com.au) (02) 9742 3288



#### Intel D850EMD2 (850e chipset)

Hyper-Threading processor ready, this is the board you're you'll need to use the Intel Pentium 4 3.06Ghz. Supports up to 2GB of RDRAM, has a 533Mhz FSB, USB/USB 2.0, ATA100, AC97 sound and a 100Mbit Ethernet controller.

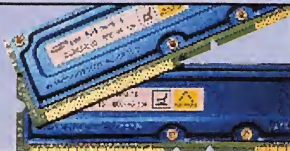
\$312 [www.techbuy.com.au](http://www.techbuy.com.au) 1 300 368 238



#### 2GB RD-RAM 1066MHz

You could buy a PC at the cost of this RAM but with 2GB you'll be moving so fast you can predict the future, and maybe make your money back.

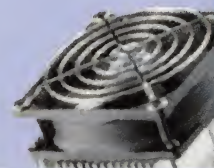
\$2500 [www.techbuy.com.au](http://www.techbuy.com.au) 1 300 368 238



#### Intel 3.06Ghz HSF

The Intel stock standard HSF that ships with the Intel 3.06Ghz processor has amazingly efficient cooling. Better than a lot of the high priced competition, this "cool" orb HSF with the copper bottom is entirely beast worthy.

\$0 [www.intel.com](http://www.intel.com) (02) 9937 5800



#### Antec TruePower 550W PSU

At 550w, this PSU can reliably power an abundance of devices inside your PC. Smooth stable output and a temperature sensor that carefully regulates fan speed.

\$195 [www.gamedude.com.au](http://www.gamedude.com.au) (07) 3841 5144



### VIDEO SYSTEM AND AUDIO

#### Hercules Radeon 9700

Now even faster with their implementation featuring heat sinks on the memory allowing for more stable overclocking.

\$799 [www.guillemot.com.au](http://www.guillemot.com.au) (02) 8303 1818



#### Creative Audigy 2 Platinum

24-bit 96Khz 5.1 DVD Audio support, speaker calibration, front 5.25" panel, THX certified, uses least amount of processor of any sound card for even higher frame rates.

\$549 [australia.creative.com](http://australia.creative.com) (02) 9666 6500



#### Logitech Z-680

As quiet as the Audigy 2 and output crystal clear sound. Full digital input and output plus can decode Pro Logic/II, DTS and Dolby Digital (EX).

\$785 [www.techbuy.com.au](http://www.techbuy.com.au) (02) 9648 1818



#### Sony MDR-F1 Headphones

For when it's not appropriate to have your volume so loud the walls shake and your gut aches. Super-comfortable gold plated sonic überness.

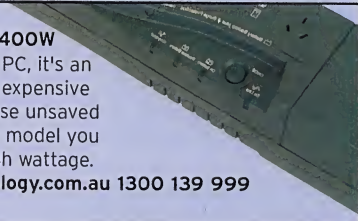
\$649 [www.sony.com.au](http://www.sony.com.au) 1300 137 669



#### APC Back-UPS 650VA/400W

The beast is more than a PC, it's an investment! Protect your expensive components and never lose unsaved work again. And with this model you need not fear, even at high wattage.

\$340 [www.harristechnology.com.au](http://www.harristechnology.com.au) 1300 139 999

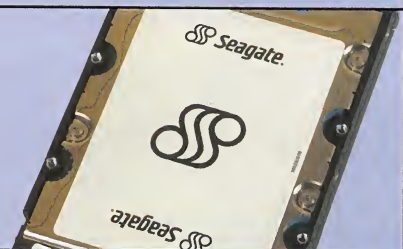


### LATEST ADDITION

#### Seagate Barracuda SATA 120GB

Serial ATA has been a long time coming but now that it's here we're impressed with the performance and ultra slim cable. Quickly emerging support on newer motherboards confirms that the industry also favours it. The 7200 RPM drive although not as fast as uber SCSI offerings still offers extremely high performance data transfer speeds when put into a RAID configuration.

\$1496 [www.achieva.com.au](http://www.achieva.com.au) (02) 9742 3288





## STORAGE AND OPTICAL

### Ricoh MP5125A DVD Writer

The best of the DVD writing crop. Fast, reliable and an essential archiving tool for The Beast.  
\$656 [www.ricoh.com.au](http://www.ricoh.com.au) 1 300 666 383



### ASUS CRW-5224

Offering 52x read, 52x write and 24x re-write this is currently the fastest CDRW drive around.  
\$180 [www.techbuy.com.au](http://www.techbuy.com.au) 1 300 368 238



### 4 x Seagate Barracuda SATA 120GB

Four drives arranged into a RAID formation for greater performance. Able to reach transfer rates of 150MB/s, Serial ATA with its airflow improving cable is the shape of the future. At almost half a terabyte, who can complain?  
\$1496 [www.achieva.com.au](http://www.achieva.com.au) (02) 9742 3288



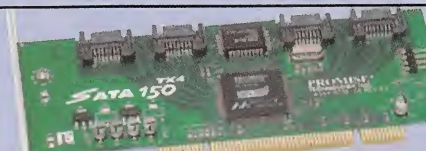
### Panasonic 3.5" Floppy

For those times when you haven't got a boot CD, the 3.5" floppy is invaluable. Also handy for transferring files via the old "sneaker-net" method.  
\$25 [www.gamedude.com.au](http://www.gamedude.com.au) (07) 3841 5144



### 4-Port Serial ATA/150 RAID controller

Sure Ultra wide SCSI is faster, but without a PCI-Express motherboard is greatly underutilised. Can be used as a highly effectively RAID solution.  
\$TBA [www.adaptec.com](http://www.adaptec.com) (02) 9416 0687



## PHYSICALITY AND INPUT

### Diamondtron 2070sp 22" Monitor

Big, beautiful, amazingly clear image quality and excellent functionality such as auto picture adjust. After hours of play, your eyes will serenely thank you for using this monitor.  
\$2249 [www.mitsubishi-electric.com.au](http://www.mitsubishi-electric.com.au) (02) 9684 7777



### Lian Li PC-71 ATX Aluminium Case

This aluminium case is large, spacious and delightfully smooth. You won't shred your hands on sharp edges when installing boards into this case.  
\$396 [www.anyware.com.au](http://www.anyware.com.au) (02) 9879 5788



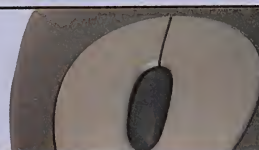
### Logitech Cordless Freedom Optical

No cables means no tangles and looking like it belongs in the lair of a Bond villain - what more could you want for the Beast?  
\$250 [www.logitech.com](http://www.logitech.com) (02) 9972 3711



### Logitech Cordless Mouse MX700

At 125Hz it's 25 cycles per second faster than a standard corded mouse and the receiver station also doubles as a recharger. An accurate pointing device it's perfect for all forms of gaming. This is certainly the best mouse ever made!  
\$189 [www.harristechnology.com.au](http://www.harristechnology.com.au) 1 300 139 999



### Thrustmaster H.O.T.A.S. Cougar Flight

Modeled on the F-16 flight stick and throttle, the HOTAS Cougar will make you a master of flight sims.  
\$600 [au.thrustmaster.com](http://au.thrustmaster.com) (02) 8303 1818



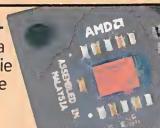
### Logitech Momo Force

The same wheel found in sports cars around the world available for your PC. Fuzzy dice optional.  
\$499 [www.logitech.com](http://www.logitech.com) (02) 9972 3711



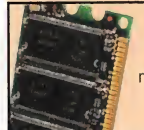
## the beastie

**AMD Athlon 2100+**  
Extreme power for a low price. The beastie gets faster and more affordable.  
\$205



### 512MB of Hyundai DDR333 RAM

The perfect amount of memory for gaming. Fast at 333MHz  
\$294



### Abit KD7 Via KT400

Supports DDR400 memory, Ethernet, AGP 8X, ATA133, USB 2.0  
\$264



### 60GB Seagate Barracuda

7200 RPM and plenty of space for full installs  
\$192



### Sony 16x DVD (40x CD) ROM

Should be considered an essential item, our DVD disk is so full of demo goodness we don't want you to miss out.  
\$95



### Gigabyte R9500, 64MB

Full DirectX 9 compatibility, AGP 8x and only a little slower than the R9700.  
\$369



### Creative Sound Blaster Live! DE 5.1 SE

Full EAX 1 and 2 support plus digital out and 5.1 support for a ..."song".  
\$75



### BenQ G774 17" CRT

Flat Monitor 0.25mm diagonal dot pitch. Affordable and reliable  
\$295



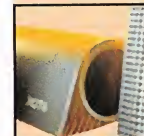
### Black Millennium case

Mid size case with a clear side Perspex window and 350W PSU  
\$110



### TDK Tremor TS-60 Speakers

Excellent bass and amazing satellite response.  
\$130



**total beastie value: \$2029**



**TOTAL BEAST VALUE:**

**APPROX \$14225**



# SETUP



WRITE TO SETUP AT:

Setup  
PC Powerplay  
78 Renwick St  
Redfern  
NSW 2016

setup@pcpowerplay.com.au

## LETTER OF THE MONTH: OVERCLOCKING PENTIUM 4

**Q** How can I unlock my P4-2.4B so that I can change its multiplier? I want to lower it so that I can pump up my FSB, hopefully without it becoming unstable. I have a VIA P4PB 400-FL. As you know, the MoBo supports changing the CPU ratio but it's locked in the processor. Despite popular belief I know it can be done because I've seen it. After uploading my Radeon's disappointingly low 3D mark score of 13641, I compared it with other scores only to find that some systems had P4-2.4GHz CPUs but were getting scores close to 20000! I looked at the specs of their machines with a little more detail only to find some of their FSBs at 200MHz. So, 1) How does one unlock the P4 (I know you can like use a lead pencil)? 2) Am I getting a good 3Dmark score for my Radeon 9700 PRO? I kind of expected higher. 3) I'd also like some tweaking advice in the BIOS - like settings that give the best performance and so forth.

Ahmed

**A** Unlocking a P4, if at all possible, is fraught with danger and a lead pencil is about as useful as an ashtray on a motorbike. At the time of writing the cheapest 2.4GHz I could find was \$450, God knows how much you paid and are you prepared to risk it?

Before you do anything to your precious CPU you must become intimately familiar with it and that means knowing things like its sSpec number (there are seven, all coded "SL6xx"). Tom's Hardware got a P4-3.06GHz running at 4.1GHz, using dual DDR400 memory and a FSB speed of over 700MHz (quad pumped). This ultimate performance was achieved thanks to a modified Chip Con cooling system, a specially selected CPU, an ASUS P4G8X and the combined blessings of all Greek and Roman Gods. They said "The PC operates with a cooling temperature of at least minus 46 degrees Celsius - at lower CPU loads, a temperature as low as minus 52 is possible. Compared to overclocking with liquid hydrogen (eek...what?), where systems will only operate stably for a few minutes beyond 4000MHz, our solution is perfectly suited for everyday use and can be used in a professional environment." Huh? Everyday use? More dollars than sense, I reckon. I don't like the way that the Radeon 9700 PRO runs an OpenGL game; it sucks at MOHAA and every other sodding game I've tried. All this is my way of saying I ain't going to be the one to tell you how to destroy that expensive CPU.



Too much of this could burn your house down



Now that's just getting me all excited

### BLURRY DVD

**Q** When I'm watching DVD movies on my Samsung the picture is blurry. I have a 14 inch monitor, could that be the problem? How much longer will my PC be of any use? It's a Duron 1.2GHz, EPoX 8KTAL3+Pro, 250MB SDRAM, and a TNT2 M64. It plays most games fine, but - I played the UT2K3 demo from PCPP and was nearly in tears when I saw how pathetic it looked. Will upgrading my graphics card be enough to make my machine be able to run great, new games? What's your opinion of the EPoX 8KTAL3+PRO? Is my motherboard AGP4X?

Luke

**A** A blurry movie is caused by a poor quality or sick monitor, a lack of DVD decoding hardware and a combination of other minor hardware factors. A 14 inch monitor is considered old and doesn't have the technology that we now take for granted in late models. A new 17 inch monitor is relatively cheap. EPoX was among the first companies to release KT133A solutions: the EP-8KTA3 and the EP-8KTA3+. EPoX's previous attempt at the KT133 chipset, the EP-8KTA2, was a decent board but it wasn't very impressive. With the KT133A chipset they gained a lot of ground at the time, repeat, "at the time". RAID, 6 PCI slots, an ISA slot, integrated sound, tweakable FSB, USB, ATA100, WOL, Key Board Power On, phew! Your board will only run a Duron on a 266MHz Max FSB, lighting up PC133 SDRAM and it will run CL2 RAM with no problems. It will run AGP at 4x but it's still only AGP 1.0. Each vendor's implementation of

AGP 1.0/4x is different. My MSI 6337 is AGP 1.0/4x but will not run a PowerColor GeForce4 MX440 which is AGP 2/4x. Your EP-8KTA3+PRO is like my MSI 6337 Pro-R: nice to know, getting on in age like granny but useful to the end. You could upgrade to XP, bung in as much RAM as you can afford and the fastest Duron (1300MHz Morgan) you can scrounge then track down an AGP 1.0/4x video adaptor that you know is going to work (MX400) or an AGP 2.0 adaptor (MX440 or a Ti) that can run at 3.3V. The Duron range of CPUs don't have the multimedia ability of the Celeron. This is the major reason, along with price, for why the Duron is the processor of choice for web-host server farms.

### GATEWAY DOESN'T WORK

**Q** None of my PCs get Internet access from the gateway computer. No proper IP addresses are assigned, instead all are using the "automatic private address". Whenever I try to repair the connection I get the error "unable to renew IP address". Even when the other PCs, including my laptop are assigned static IPs they still don't connect to the gateway which has been assigned the IP 192.168.0.1 with a subnet mask of 255.255.255.0 I've disabled the connection, made a new one and it didn't help. My network adaptor is an onboard Intel Pro/100 VE on my GA-81EXP in WinXP Pro.

Jayson

**A** Done any ping-ing? Click on the "Start Menu" and select "Run" (without the quotes). Type "cmd" in the dialog box and click





Gateway... geddit?

"OK" or press <Enter>. A command prompt will then appear that looks similar to an MS-DOS prompt. Type "ping localhost" and see if there's a result other than "unreachable" or something ass-puckering like that (Ass-puckering? - Ed). Ping the other machines. Maybe there's just no DHCP server on that network. Do you have XP on the other machines or are you just rich and can afford multiple instances of XP and its eye-watering cost? I'm betting that you have Win98 on the other rigs. I'm also betting that you're on dial-up rather than ADSL/Cable. Here's the simple advice: Right click on the Internet connection (the one with the yellow telephone) and select properties. Then click on the Sharing Tab and check the box that says "Enable Internet Connection Sharing for this connection". In the "For local network:" box, select your NIC. Make sure "Enable on-demand dialling" is checked. Now, if you use DHCP let me underline its importance by saying DHCP is your friend. Using DHCP makes your network much easier to manage, and will allow you to change many settings on the fly, without having to visit each and every client system. Also, configuring WINS and DNS will allow you to quickly communicate with machines on your LAN or out on the Internet. You'll need to decide if you are setting up your systems in a DOMAIN or a WORKGROUP. The advantage of a DOMAIN is that it centralises administration and account management, but many people with only three or four machines may not want to dedicate a system to be the server in this

configuration. If you do go with a WORKGROUP, be sure that all Windows systems on the network use the same WORKGROUP name. While WinNT/Win2K/XP Pro handle multiple protocols rather nicely, and provide a nice mechanism to ensure binding order, Win9x is less than pleased at the additional resources which are consumed. If you see an IP address that begins with 169.254, you have the auto-configuration address and it isn't valid. If you don't have a valid IP address, then type in "ipconfig /release" and press <Enter>, then type "ipconfig /renew" and press <Enter>. If you receive an error message saying, "No adaptors bound to TCP/IP are enabled for DHCP," then a static IP address is specified. If you still receive an error message that says, "DHCP server unavailable" or "DHCP server unreachable", the Ethernet cable is most likely fractured and should be replaced.

## DUAL BOOT

**Q** I'm running a dual boot on my PC and now want to tidy things up. I want to start again with XP on a different partition. What do I do without stuffing everything up?!

Nelson

**A** If you decide to get rid of one of the operating systems in a multi-boot (NT/Win2K/XP and Win9x/Me) configuration, you'll need to straighten out your boot loader process. Here are some procedures for fixing your boot sector, depending on the OS you want to keep: REMOVING WINDOWS 9X/ME, KEEPING NT (1) Boot from the NT CD. (2) Choose "Repair" (3) Select "Inspect Boot Sector" (4) Reboot (5) Remove the HID, SYS and R/O attributes from BOOT.INI (6) Edit BOOT.INI and remove old entries for Win9x/Me (7) Remove the Windows9x/ME files and folders - MSDOS.SYS - IO.SYS REMOVING WINDOWS 9X/ME, KEEPING 2000/XP/.NET (1) Boot from the WIN2K/XP/.NET CD (2) Choose "Emergency Repair Console" (3) Logon as Administrator (4) Type: FIXMBR (5) Type: EXIT (6) Remove the HID, SYS and R/O attributes from BOOT.INI (7) Edit BOOT.INI and remove old entries for Win9x/Me (8) Remove the

Sothohtsoft Scan Disk

Dimensional Windows

A fatal exorcism OE has occurred at 0023:C000A313 in UXD UFMTXAGDN  
The current invocation will be terminated.

- \* Press any key to terminate the current invocation.
- \* Press CILU+ALT+DLT again to restart your communion. You will lose any unsaved souls in all applications.

Press any key to continue

Number 45 in a series of 15000

Windows9x/Me files and folders - MSDOS.SYS - IO.SYS REMOVING WINDOWS NT/WIN2K/XP/.NET, KEEPING WINDOWS 9X/ME (1) Boot from the Win9x Startup Disk (2) Type: FDISK /MBR (3) Type: SYS C: (4) Reboot (5) Remove the offending Windows root folders and files - Pagefile.sys - Boot.ini - Ntldr - Ntdetect.com - Ntbootdd.sys For maximum effect, Win9x/Me and NT/Win2K/XP should be installed on different partitions, as you really don't want to have Program Files and the Recycle bin shared across multiple instances of Windows. When dual-booting NT/Win2K/XP and Win9x/Me, it's best to place Win9x/Me on drive C: and to place the other OS on another drive. It's also best to install NT/Win2K/XP last, although you can get a dual boot to work when Win9x/Me has been installed last, it's just more work. Don't make the mistake of installing the same apps to the same location under each instance of Windows that you are dual/multi booting, especially if these applications use the registry. If you must install the same app under different Windows, do it to different locations.

## BSOD ADDICT

**Q** My system continues to be unstable. I get a blue screen of death with some apps and lockups with others. I used to run Win98SE fine but recently upgraded to WinXP with some difficulty! I'm losing valuable gaming time!

Jason

**A** Bad drivers are more likely to result in a BSOD, while bad RAM or overheating will more likely result in a system lockup, or spontaneous reboot. Searching Google for the STOP error number is a very fast way to find a resolution (or at least get a good description of the problem). I find that the most common STOP Errors are 0x0A and 0x1E. The former tends to be a bad driver, while the later represents flaky memory, an overheating system, an inadequate power supply, or a fluctuating power source. Hardware that was fine in Win9x may cause lockups or crashes in Win2K/XP simply because it's borderline or the drivers are different. Win2K and WinXP tend to stress hardware more than their low-end siblings. Another common reason for STOP

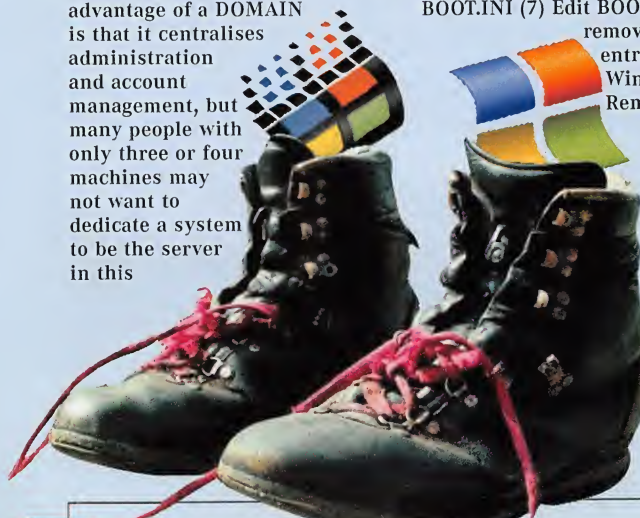
0x0A Errors is the art of overclocking. This can wreak havoc with the timing of peripherals on the PCI bus. Good installation practices (of both hardware and software) will virtually eliminate BSODs and system lockups. This includes clean installs, rather than upgrades when moving from Win9x to Win2K and XP.

## TOO MUCH MEMORY!

**Q** I've now plugged a whole gigabyte of DDR RAM into my PC and it still wants to use a pagefile! Along with the RAM and a 128MB ASUS 8460 TD ULTRA 4600, I have a KD7-RAID mainboard running an Athlon XP 2700+ in WinXP Pro, I do a lot of database management (and some graphics management) at home thus the configuration. But I'm a keen gamer and want to minimise or avoid the use of the page file.

David Allen

**A** No matter how much physical RAM you have, XP (and NT/Win2K for that matter) always uses a pagefile which is by design - Microsoft strongly recommends that you don't disable or delete the paging file. In order to determine exactly what size pagefile you need, you should monitor various counters using PERFMON. In most cases, however, I've been able to observe general consensus on the default size - Microsoft says 1.5 times RAM and power users like three times. Generally speaking, your pagefile size should exceed the amount of RAM installed in your system. This is because of how XP allocates pages for virtual memory and how active pages are swapped into the pagefile. Given the goodies in your rig the difference in performance between an optimal pagefile and a less-than-optimal pagefile isn't as great as it used to be, given a Pentium 2 only a few years ago. I believe it's a much better idea to ensure that





your system is properly defragged. Although I've come across a few (poorly written) apps that function poorly with a large pagefile, you generally don't suffer any sort of penalty for having more pagefile than required. If you're running MS Access with big tables and near 8KB per record then a gigabyte of RAM is fine. If you use Sybase or Informix or even Superstar products (i.e. stupidly powerful database apps) and you're getting up around 16KB records you'll definitely need to spend more time tuning and sizing your box as it pertains to performance in general and paging in particular. Checkout Microsoft Knowledge Base Article - 308417 - HOW TO: Set Performance Options in Windows XP, though this is limited in nature but you're not running a server where you need to map processes to virtual memory. If you have more than 1GB RAM, you really should use PERFMON to determine the proper pagefile size for your system. For the most part, the more apps you run simultaneously, the greater your paging needs are likely to be. Remember, disk space is cheap. There are very, very few scenarios where having a large pagefile will cause a problem with your system, but if your pagefile is too small, you'll not be able to map virtual space at all for all running processes, which will prevent you from fully utilising your installed physical memory. But what a killer rig for gaming!

## WANT MORE RES!

**Q** I'm running a big Philips monitor and a fast video card in WinXP. When I try to select the highest possible refresh rates or resolutions that are supported by the monitor and video adaptor (GeForce4 Ti4600), the options don't appear. I'm dying at 1024x768 @75Hz - please help!

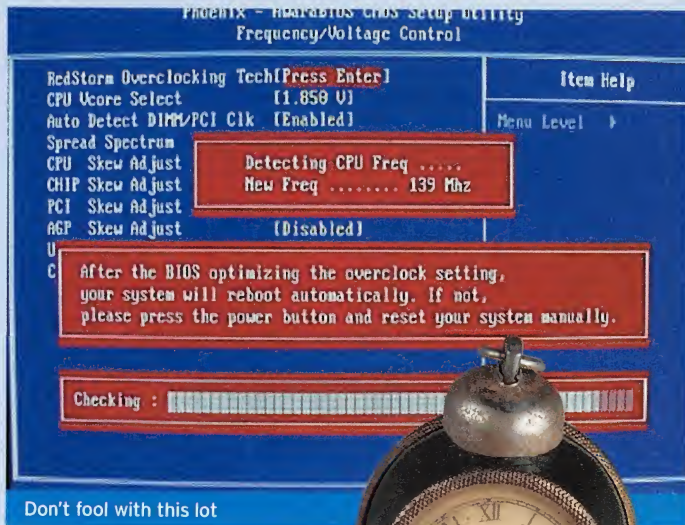
OLDMcDonald

**A** This problem can occur because of the way Windows calculates the supported graphics modes based on the information in

your monitor's .inf file. When XP was released it included a bunch of custom-built and vendor provided .INF (driver) files. High-end monitors come with driver software that is updated by the manufacturer as required. The .inf file lists a maximum supported horizontal and vertical bandwidth for that monitor, and Windows calculates the supported video modes based on this data. In some cases, the algorithm that is used is too conservative, and this can prevent you from using the highest possible modes that are supported by your monitor. Note that there may be limitations that are imposed by the video adaptor as well. In my case, I'm using the Acer98.INF file for my screens. The workaround for older monitors is just too dangerous to mention here but, in general, if your monitor supports Plug and Play use the Display tool in Control Panel to change the monitor driver to "Plug and Play Monitor." When you do so, Windows queries your monitor to determine the supported video modes instead of calculating them based on the monitor's .inf file.

## RED STORM

**Q** Recently I was looking around the BIOS on my new PC. I saw a program labelled "Red Storm Overclocking". Now naturally I was curious so I hit Enter and it comes up with this sort of loading screen thing (all in red) for about two seconds so I couldn't read anything that it said. And then with no warning my PC just goes BEEP and shuts itself down. Since then I've not been able to boot up it just goes BEEP again and instantly turns off. I tried inserting a boot disk and starting up to no avail. I've got an AMD 2100XP+, ATi Radeon 9000PRO on a Soltek SL-75DRV5 with Win98SE. Do I need a new MoBo? Now a second problem (just assume my PC is running normal again) it detects my chip as an AMD XP1500+ running at 1.3GHz. How do I get it to see it as a 2100+? I've tried loading up defaults and whatever but it didn't work. also I'm



not sure what BIOS I've so that makes it a bit harder. SO PLEASE HELP ME GET BACK TO MY GAMING GOODNES!!!

D Scrub

**A** Whoops! "Red Storm Overclocking" is a very handy feature, if you know sweet FA about overclocking. Still, you have to be prepared for the near-worst. After selecting "YES", the rest of the work is handled by the system. What happens next is very simple: the board starts raising the FSB MHz by integers of "1" and doing a quick stability test. When it finally gets high enough that the board fails, it reboots and lowers the FSB value. Basically, it finds what it considers to be the highest stable bus speed for your setup. Gone are the days of moving one rung at a time up what can be a very tall MHz ladder. Grab your MB handbook and locate the Clear CMOS jumper and short it as shown. If the system isn't damaged then it will reboot into defaults. Try an upgrade as a last resort. BIOS version T1.5 supports the XP 2400+, 2600+, 2700+ CPUs so I don't think it's a critical BIOS issue. BIOS version T1.6, on the other hand, fixed the compatibility issue of BIOS T1.5 simply with just ATi video adaptors.

## ALARMING ALARMS

**Q** What is going on, when an alarm sounding like an ambulance roaring down the street, inexplicably sounds from inside the box? It's quite indiscriminate as to when it sounds but the whole computer freezes for 10 to 30 seconds while it wails away. This happens every fifteen minutes to half an hour. I've run the latest virus software, installed new video drivers, etc but nothing seems to work. Please I'm going insane with my Celeron 500

Chris Langford

**A** The symptoms read like the temperature alarm warning in the BIOS but I can't imagine a Celeron 500 overheating unless the heatsink/fan has dislodged. If you regularly give it a whack



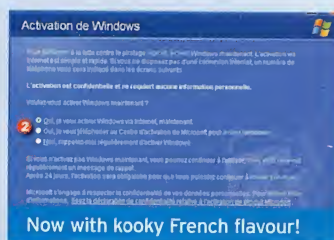
because it's too slow at Counter-Strike then the minuscule heating system could be loose or lying at the bottom of the case.

## XP WON'T ACTIVATE

**Q** I recently bought a new computer (Athlon 2000XP+, 1 gig of RAM, Radeon 9000) and with it I got WinXP. Just the other day my computer's hard disk became a bit stubborn and wouldn't work properly, so it needed to be formatted. Now it's fine, but I can't activate XP again! After 30 days it's going to stop working, I don't want to have to go and buy another one. What should I do? Is there any way around Microsoft's stupid way of reducing piracy?

Josh Tredwell

**A** If you reformat the hard disk and reinstall the product, reactivation is required. The same grace periods for activation apply in this situation. You can reactivate a product on the same computer as many times as you require. The activation can be completed by using the telephone or over the Internet. Microsoft Knowledge Base Article - 302878 - Frequently Asked Questions about Microsoft Product Activation states this, there should be no problem but it sounds like you may have to use the telephone. Have your birth certificate, mother's maiden name and inside leg measurement ready as Microsoft requires all of these.





## FATAL STUTTER

**Q** I have a P4-2.4GHz running WinXP SP1 on a GA-8SRX, a 3DBlaster Geforce3 Ti200 and Audigy. While I'm playing a game (Simcity4 most recently), it game just locks, the sound loops and then my PC quits to Windows and says that I've had a device failure/error. The screen then goes to 640x480 @ 4 bit. I suspect it's heat but I'm not running anything overclocked at all. I've the latest DirectX. But I still run the drivers that came with GF3 and SB because they are rock solid.

Yuri

**A** I can't find this as an issue ("by design" as Microsoft would say) for your gear. If you don't suspect heat then reinstall the video drivers, as it's not uncommon for a file to come unglued. I'd also investigate a BIOS update (8srx\_f9.zip) for two reasons: for support to the "Top Performance" item in the BIOS main screen and for support to the "AUTO" option for AGP/PCI clock settings. This card overclocks like a star. It has got very good quality 4ns memory and has tested to be completely stable at 250MHz core clock speed and 540MHz memory clock speed.

## SCARY EXCLAMATION

**Q** I've got a yellow "!" mark in Win98 Device Manager on my Gigabyte motherboard's Promise RAID controller after installing drivers from IUCD 2.22.

Anon

**A** This yellow mark indicates that the Promise RAID controller was set to RAID mode, but there are no devices attached to it. It will disappear when RAID is properly set (Stripe or Mirror) and disks are attached.

## SLOW BROWSER

**Q** Every time I go start IE6 and online it takes about 10-15 secs to load, after finally loading the browser, the program freezes for about 5-10 secs, every time I open a link in a new window, before returning to normal. I've tried reinstalling but it still occurs, could there be a conflict with ZoneAlarm or Norton AV (which both

run while I'm online)? I'm running a P4-1.7GHz on a GA-8IRM with 512MB RAM, GeForce4 440 and WinXP.

Ben

**A** Norton AntiVirus will do this as can be configured to check all the Java content downloaded in a web page. I've the same problem with PC-cillin and nothing but a software fix by the developers will make it go away.

## NO NETWORK

**Q** I've just replaced my Network card and I've no network anymore. I can't get the new NIC up and running, whatever happened to Plug and Play?

Ben2

**A** When you replace hardware in WinXP (or Win2K) it must first be uninstalled rather than just ripped out with fingers crossed. To eliminate some errors you must delete any old NICs from the WinXP Device Manager. Open a command-prompt and enter the following commands:

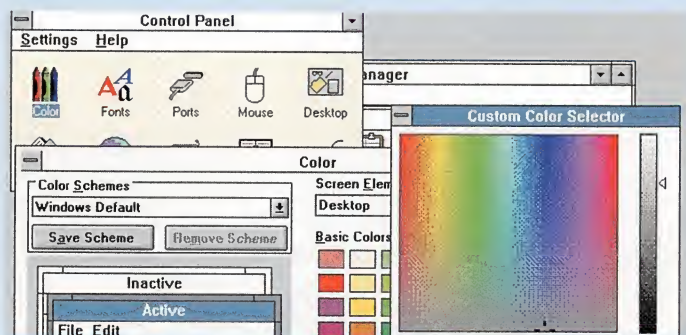
```
set devmgr_show_nonpresent_devices=1
start devmgmt.msc
```

The first command allows Device Manager to show phantom devices. The second command launches Device Manager. From the Device Manager's menu, select View, Show hidden devices. Expand the Network Adaptor tree, and delete the old adaptor.

## USEFUL WEBPAGES

Before we get to the linkage, I'd like to take this opportunity to say most people begin their tales of PC woe with "Great mag!" and are about PC PowerPlay in general. As gratifying as these salutations are, you really shouldn't feel obliged to compliment the magazine to get an answer. I think the Editor would love it if eighty readers a month emailed him with this praise, instead of the bitter invective he normally seems to dredge up for Inbox (Hey Stu, you do your letters page, I'll do mine - Ed).

Bookmark these sites:  
[support.microsoft.com/](http://support.microsoft.com/)  
[club.cdfreaks.com/](http://club.cdfreaks.com/)  
[forums.viaarena.com/](http://forums.viaarena.com/)  
[www.dalantech.com/](http://www.dalantech.com/)  
[www.ultratech-llc.com/KB/](http://www.ultratech-llc.com/KB/)  
[www.hardwareanalysis.com/](http://www.hardwareanalysis.com/)  
[www.yourmotherboard.com/](http://www.yourmotherboard.com/)



Slow browser? It could be worse... it could be Windows 3.0

# WARNING!

These polaroids have been supplied by the police and may disturb some viewers. If you have information in regards to the heinous kitten-napper known only as "Theo" then please contact the website below. Thank you citizens!



[www.pcpowerplay.com.au](http://www.pcpowerplay.com.au)  
 (Oh the felinity!)



# THE ORACLE

WRITE TO THE ORACLE AT:

The Oracle  
PC Powerplay  
78 Renwick St  
Redfern  
NSW 2016

oracle@pcpowerplay.com.au

You might think you're clever catching the Oracle out but a mistake was only inevitable. You should see some of the poorly put together letters I receive. No mission name or number, hell I'm lucky to get anything more than "Dear Oracle I am Stuck" out of most of you. It really gets my goat but enough of the bleating, the following community announcement really takes the buck.



## CODE

### Sim City 4

Press [Ctrl] + X during game play to display the console window. Type any of the following codes and press [Enter]:

**stopwatch:** Toggle the 24 hour clock  
**stopwatch:** Set time of the day (military format)  
**whatimeizit:** Change city name  
**whererufrom:** Change mayor name  
**hellomynameis:** Unlock all rewards1  
**you don't deserve it:** Set magnification level  
**sizeof <0-100>:** Set magnification level  
**weaknesspays:** 1,000 more Simoleons in treasury  
**fightthepower:** No power requirement for all buildings  
**Howdrylam:** No water requirement for all buildings  
**zoneria:** Hide empty zone color  
**tastyzots:** Toggle Zots  
**recorder:** Start recorder



### NBA Live 2003

In the player creation screen use any of the following codes as the last name to get those players:

**GHETTOFAB:** Get 'Ghetto Fabulous'  
**MIXTAPES:** Get 'DJ Clue'  
**FLIPMODE:** Get 'Busta Rhymes'  
**DOLLABILLS:** Get 'B-Rich'

## Neverwinter Nights

**Q** Oh, mighty knower-of-all, I can't complete the werewolf quest in Neverwinter Nights. I've rescued all the three unfortunates who were affected with lycanthropy, and given their tokens to Nurik, but whenever I enter the cave near the Green Gryphon Inn where the last werewolf, Sir whatever-his-name is supposed to be, I get some text that tells me "whatever lived here is not home at the moment" what's the deal? I abase myself before your amazingly knowledgeable person.

Loki the half-elven fighter-mage-thief-cleric from the forest of Yore riding forth with his sword-of-not-being-able-to-find-werewolves +12

**A** Werewolves come out at night. Have you tried visiting the cave then? If Sir Karathis is still not there then it's a known bug - where handing in the rings one at a time instead of all together, stuffs up the scripting to trigger Sir Karathis. To fix this go to the werewolf cave (SE corner of the Green Griffon Inn's area) and type this:

1. Press tilde key [~], type "DebugMode 1" + [Enter]. (Don't type the quotes.)
2. Type "~runscript m2q1a02nrkslc04" + [Enter]. (This corrects the conversation with Neurik.)
3. Type "~runscript m2q1neurik001" + [Enter]. (This makes Sir Karathis spawn.)
4. Press tilde key [~] and type "DebugMode 0" + [Enter] to return to normal. Sir Karathis will be inside waiting for you to beat him to an almost bloody pulp so you can then use the silver

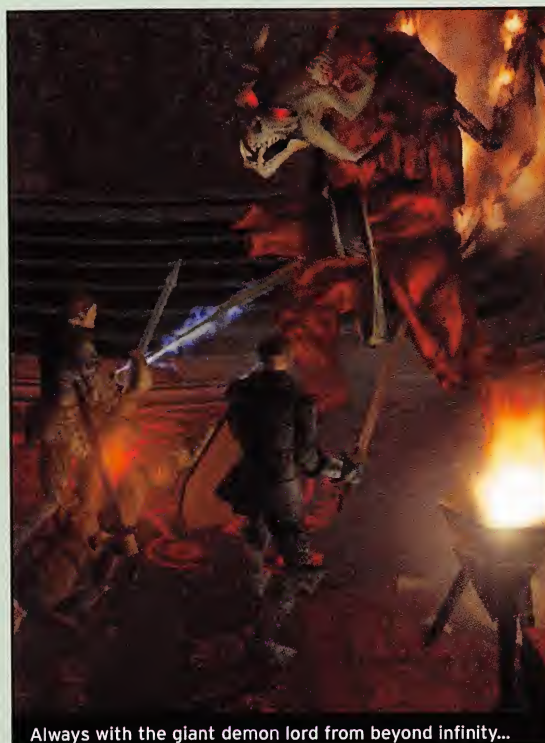
charm to cure him. He'll give you a journal and reveal the shocking truth of this werewolf business... the Black Wolf is much closer to home than you'd think. I won't spoil the surprise, but when it comes to fighting the true Black Wolf, be prepared to deal with a level 16 ranger



## COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENT

A method for "smurfing", or anonymously packet flooding certain game servers, particularly Battlefield 1942, has been discovered. Tell tale signs that it's happening to your server will be everyone's ping going up dramatically and game play becoming jerky. So far there is no solution for this. For more information:

<http://www.pivx.com/kristovich/adv/mk001/>



Always with the giant demon lord from beyond infinity...



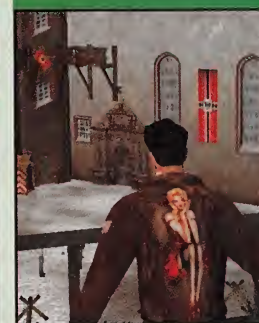
Mmm... Rachael Weisz!

## CODE

### Prisoner Of War

At the password screen enter any of these case sensitive codes:

**gerleng5:** All levels unlocked  
**defaultm:** No levels unlocked  
**alltimes:** All daily events  
**coretimes:** All core events  
**farleymydog:** No core events except current  
**Boston:** First person view  
**Foxy:** Overhead view  
**Dino:** Unlimited money or rocks  
**Muffin:** Change guard size  
**Quincy:** Change guard awareness  
**Fatty:** Cannot be shot  
**Joe:** Display where your barracks officer is on radar in chapters 2 to 5  
**Kaz:** Display peripheral vision radar





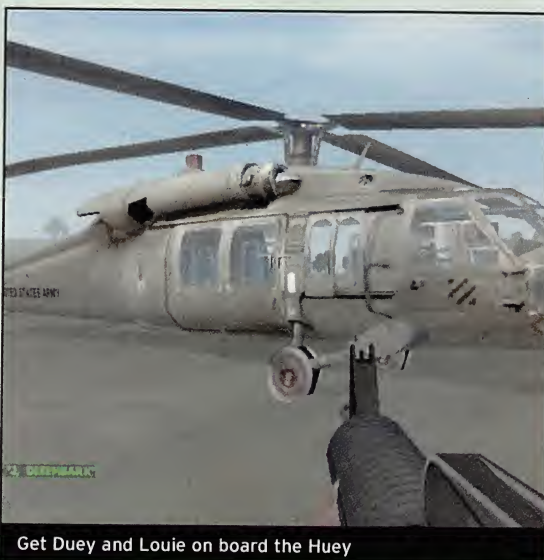
## Morrowind

**Q** I got a quest from the Temple in Vivec to purge the Ihinipalit shrine in the St. Delyn Underworks and bring the leader, Bjadmund to justice. The only problem is, when I went there Bjadmund wasn't home and now I can't complete the quest. Also, I have the Daedric Armour drop patch but that's only a 25% chance, so if you can provide some general locations for Daedric armour this will also be helpful.

Zippy, e-mail

**A** Let's assume you went to the correct place: the Ihinipalit Shrine is found in the St Delyn Underworks, via the St Delyn Canalworks, via St Delyn Wasteworks, and there's 4 cult members to kill, one guarding the shrine outside and three inside. Now Bjadmund is not found, then let us pray to St Delyn, the patron saint of buggy Morrowind quests.

You're in luck, Zippy because St Delyn revealed the fix to the Oracle in a dream last night: If the NPC is alive but stuck in the game, then reset them by pressing the tilde key [~] to open the console, then typing: ra. All actors in your current cell will be reset to their original locations, so enter this code when you're at the shrine. If that doesn't bring forth a Bjadmund, then St Delyn grants you the special power to summon a copy of the errant NPC by typing into the console: placeatpc "bjadmund",1,1,1 Do this in the shrine area to avoid upsetting the delicate cosmic balance. Report back to Llethan to receive the Ancestral Wisdom Staff (3-7 damage, summons a ghost for 100 seconds). St Delyn is merciful and benevolent; he has also given the locations of Daedric armour. Look in the Code section and go slaughter a goat as a thanks offering.



Get Duey and Louie on board the Huey

## Operation flashpoint

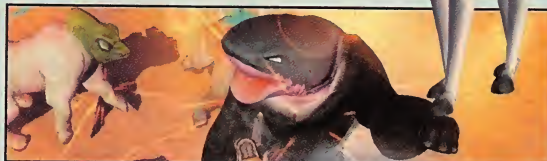
**Q** I'm stuck on the level After Montignac I keep on getting about 200m away from the 2nd extraction point and then I get shot by some Russian soldier. Could you help me out? It's starting to frustrate me.

Sam W

**A** This is indeed a difficult mission - too many fall to the Russian soldier at the end, but pay attention and you may yet live to tell heroic tales to your grandchildren. If you must grab the binoculars and LAWS from the 2 dead soldiers - be quick or you'll be spotted. Turn north and bolt halfway into the forest, then turn northeast and run to the eastern end of the forest. Yes there's Russkies waiting there, but there's blind spots too, so retry until you find the right spot to exit the forest and cross the road.

Follow parallel to the road, heading south to Provins. Go the most NE house in Provins and grab the grenades behind it. Save game. Crawl to the NE corner of the house. Over in the distance is a UAZ, a few Russians and to the right of the UAZ behind some trees is a BMP. Take out the BMP with a LAW and lob grenades at the soldiers. Drive the UAZ onto the road, heading south. Drive through Figari and check your map. There's a left turnoff 200m outside Figari. Go past the turnoff and head due south over the open field, you should be heading straight for the second evacuation point. Drive like the blazes along the tree lines, zigzagging to avoid being hit. Near the evac point, you'll be taken captive. Go with the flow and either stay in the tent when the Resistance come to rescue you or, if you

must, crawl outside the tent, grab an AK47 and sprint ahead and to the left of the tent where some Resistance fighters are cleaning up. Follow them and you'll get to meet fearless Slava. If you're a total wuss and still fail at this, then at the start, hide in forest and put on time acceleration. After a while it will get foggy and you can run to the finish point without being seen.



## CODE

### Impossible Creatures

During gameplay press the tilde key [~] to open the console and type any of the following codes:  
**cheat\_electricity(9999)**: Get 9999 Electricity  
**cheat\_coal(9999)**: Add 9999 Coal  
**cheat\_killself**: Die  
**cheat\_rank**: Get Higher rank  
**cheat\_buildings**: Get more buildings



### Arx Fatalis

**Mega loot**  
 After you break out of the cell, kill the goblin. Walk to the table and look at the pile of rubbish in the corner. Grab the bone out of the pile. Double click the bone, then click on the chair ten times and you'll get a lot of very good loot.



### Medal of Honor Allied Assault: Spearhead

During play press the tilde [~] key and type any of the following codes:  
**wuss**: All weapons  
**fullheal**: Full health

### FIFA 2003



**Seoul stadium**: Win the EFA trophy to unlock the Seoul stadium  
**Stade de France stadium**: Win the Club Championship to unlock the Stade de France stadium  
**Yokohama stadium**: Win the ECC trophy to unlock the Yokohama stadium  
**Unbeatable challenge**: Win the World Tour tournament

### Total Immersion Racing

Type any of the following codes as a career name:

**Loaded**: All cars  
**Downforce**: CART car  
**Road Sweeps**: All tracks  
**Feather**: Low gravity  
**Poke**: Slow motion  
**Walk It**: Slower CPU cars  
**No Dogs**: Disable HUD



### Totally useless DVD cheats Eight Legged Freaks

Remain idle at any menu that has moving spiders. When the spider stops moving press Up to highlight it, then press Enter for information on that particular species.



Get your groin out of my face, lizard lips



## Baldur's Gate

**Q** Oh Great and Wise Oracle, Please help this humble adventurer complete the quest set before me. I have battled my way to the wondrous city of Baldur's Gate and have been given the task of cleansing the sewers by Scar, the leader of the Flaming Fists. I had thought that this putrid job would be easily accomplished by a simple Power Word Flush spell. Unfortunately I was gravely mistaken, and now I find that my hearty band of adventures require greater experience to finish the quest.

Yours in loyalty  
Sir Drago Blacksun,  
e-mail

**A** Those carrion crawlers are pesky, but the Ogre Mage is not that difficult, nowhere in the league of, say, Sarevok, who is definitely not for the faint hearted. Two ways to master this situation, Sir Drago: Fireballs or Expendable Minions. Have your cleric and/or mage create minions to bash said Mage en masse while your party hangs back and uses range weapons - arrows of slaying are good - without endangering the more delicate team members. Once the Mage is down, give the ring to Scar (3,000 exp, 3,000 gold) and sell the rest of the loot.



A cool customer, bwaha



## Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine

**Q** Dear all powerful all mighty master of the masters of games <insert more head bulging adjectives>, I have just bought Indiana Jones & the Infernal Machine and it's driving me mad. I can't find the infernal Monastic Seal. I am in a room (one that branches off to the right from the big waterfall thing) with a dead guy lying on a bed, a button on the wall to close the door and a cross thing on a pedestal. (I thought this might be the monastic seal but I can't pick it up). I have jumped up from the bed into the rafters where there was a

bar of gold but alas no seal. An helpless extremely helpless and pitiful,

Elijah Chateway, e-mail

**A** You were so close, Elijah, while you were up on the rafters helping yourself to the gold bar in the monastery bedroom, all you had to do was continue to the end of the rafter and drop into the next bedroom. In here is a button on the wall that opens a nearby door, displaying the Great Monastic Seal in all its glory. When you take the relic, you'll trigger Russian soldiers storming the monastery, just so you'll have the pleasure of fighting the odd angry Russian soldier as well as ice monsters. Head back towards the waterfall room to continue the level while I go and get a shunt inserted to deal with my suddenly bulging head.



Indy! Watch out for the crap gameplay!

## CORRECTIONS: There is a flooded road in Wan Chai in Deus Ex - #83

**Q** This is a correction to a mistake that you made in a reply to Ransom's (Issue #83) letter. You thought that he/she meant the canal was the road. There IS a flooded road. It's past a door that is in the same room as those re-breathers that are underwater. To get to this door go back to The Old China Hand. Go to the cold room behind the kitchen and jump on top of the crates then onto the bar. There are some vents that you can break on the sides of the room. Get into any vent and follow the shaft until you reach a ladder that's mostly underwater, dive down to the room that

has the re-breathers. Exit the door and head left. Once you are above water kill those weird things and get the Aug upgrade from the dead scientist body. With high skills in swimming and/or environmental training with re-breathers you can travel to the other end of the flooded road. You will find some sniper rounds and receive 50 skill points among the debris.

Bud

**A** You've done us proud Bud, and the Oracle humbly bows to your expertise. Ransom, a canal is not always a flooded road so apologies for my mix up.



It's my sunglasses... they seem to be glued on



What have you been doing to our brother?

## CODE



### Divine Divinity - Multiple charms on weapon or armour

More than 1 charm can be put into a one-slotted weapon or armour to get the effects of them all. Go to your weapon display, click on the weapon so it brings up a charm slot, then keep clicking on the weapon to bring up

multiple charm slots. Once you have enough, drop the charms in and close them when finished. Make sure all the slots you want are opened first before you start charming. You can only do this once.





# CODE



## Bandits: Phoenix Rising

As this cheat involves editing the game file, make a backup copy first. In the game directory, and using a text editor, open the file called "\bandits\data\profiles\GARA GE.XML" and edit the lines you want. For example if you want all weapons available from the first mission, go to "Mission 01" and change the "no" values to "yes". Start the game and modify your weapons.



## Ironstorm

**Q** I am stuck on level 4\_1 of Ironstorm. I am in that hallway just before the room with the two scientists in it. I run in and kill them with my sabre and then I progress to the laser control room where I killed the other scientists without setting off the alarm but now I am stuck. I can only turn the laser on for a few seconds then it turns off??? I tried going down to the laser room itself but I always get caught by that guy with the rocket launcher and the guy with the machine gun and get wasted??? HELP!!!! They are both invincible (WHAT THE??)

David, WA

**A** No set of pixels should be invincible unless you let them, Dave. To rectify the situation, do the level this way, remembering that with nothing better than a knife on you, stealth is the key: After picking up the knife and medikit in the infirmary, return to the test room (where the glass chambers are) and break some floor boards to access the garbage chute on the left. Go down it into the refuse room and through the door, taking the lift at the top of the stairs, then heading right to the end of the corridor where the ceiling turrets are (good timing avoids those). Go left and after killing the two scientists go into their room, flip the red switch, and free the dogs (kindness to animals is a good thing), then exit and go upstairs on the left. Pick up the bomb in the missile room. Return the way you came, avoiding the ladder and going straight ahead. Break the glass dome in the room above the test room (where the glass chambers are) and go through. Return to the laser room and put bomb on table. Return to the garbage chute (in test room) and go up the vent and up the ladder. Now after the first intersection in

the vent, go right and in the room above the test room, go through the door opposite the machine guns. Turn on the laser (switch is on the control panel). Return to the laser room (via the broken dome), then back in the vent, along the ladder to the scientist's room. There, go straight ahead through the door into a room with round tanks, and enter the tank on the right. Head along the pipes, crossing the round room. Go down two floors and kill the guard on duty to finally get a gun. Shoot the transparent pipe and get onto the last catwalk and go through the door into a small room. Turn on the red switch, wait until the gauge reaches the top, then retrace your steps. Take the first corridor on the left, turn on the catwalk. Head right at the next intersection. The door in the room where

the tanks are will now be open. Go there, then left, then straight ahead towards "Station Area". Take the lift to the station, operate the lever in the room on the left, then climb the ladder and get up onto the catwalk.



Fully railed



So much for the Christmas hampers...

## CORRECTIONS: Soldiers of Fortune wrong level stuff up - #83

**Q** Hey PCPP congrats on the mag but after buying over 20 issues I finally hit some dud help. You said in #83 you gave "Steve" advice about SOF that was utterly wrong, you told him about the first level of SOF (the subway). But he was asking about a later level where you chase after Sabre and you shoot him off the edge!! (Sorry about wrecking the surprise.)

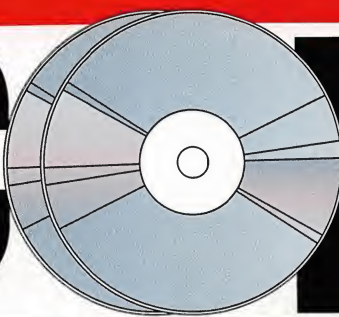
Brick (SOF KING)

**A** Thanks for putting me straight, King Brick. So here's how to get out of NY after chasing Sabre and going into that hotel. Inside the hotel, go upstairs, along the hallway with the broken lift shaft until you get to the next stairwell. Go down one flight of stairs then into the first door you see, shoot out the window and crawl

out. Then climb up the emergency stairs outside, taking out any gang member up top if you haven't done so before. Save game and jump from the railing to the small hole in the wall of the next building. Go through the door, and continue until you fall through the floor. Enter the door on the ground level; the first door on the left has stairs that collapse when an enemy jumps down to you. Kill him, and then enter the door that's last on the left to climb up a ladder, taking out the guards on top, and proceeding to the second floor where you can walk up a plank to the rooftop. Up here, you'll have the final confrontation with Sabre, and if you climb up a steel girder you'll escape from New York with mission accomplished.



# THE DISC



## REQUESTS

We welcome requests so please forward your requests to Disc Producer Paul Noone via email at [cdgod@next.com.au](mailto:cdgod@next.com.au) or write to PCPP DVD Requests, 78 Renwick St, Redfern NSW 2016

## DVD OR CDS NOT WORKING?

PC PowerPlay can only replace discs that are faulty at the time of purchase, not after the fact. Replacement discs cannot be purchased, so please take good care of them. If your disc is damaged or doesn't function as intended then please contact Paul Noone immediately by phone or email - Phone: Sydney 02 9699 0333 Email: [cdgod@next.com.au](mailto:cdgod@next.com.au)



**I** have to say that for one of the quietest month's I've ever seen we've managed to pull together some pretty fine content this month. But while game demos might have been a little down, game trailers made a huge impact. Check out Spotlight for over 1 GB and 1 hour of video bliss. Featured are the Matrix and Hulk trailers, as well as much more from those DOA girls and a couple of massive Unreal 2 clips.

Thanks to this month's feedback in the PCPP Forums we've also got some other great extras this issue. Among them are the latest Fusion Pack for Half-Life, the UT 2003 Digital Extreme Bonus Pack and the mega patch for Battlefield: 1942.

Notable demos are the full America's Army, the new Black Hawk Down, Enclave, Homeplanet and NASCAR Racing 2003 Season.

I've also granted most people's wishes for Mods Plus by including all the latest and greatest mod requests such as Desert Combat and Vampire Slayer - and Bunker madness unfolds as that wily old coyote, ROM, brings forth yet another truly massive melange of gaming goodness.

Don't forget to check Patches for your latest game updates and be sure to stop by Utilities for some essential files. Media Player 9, DivX 5.1.3 and the latest nVIDIA drivers are among them.

**Paul Noone**  
Disc Master  
[cdgod@next.com.au](mailto:cdgod@next.com.au)

## FULL GAME!

## AMERICA'S ARMY 1.5

From the official literature: America's Army is a realistic FPS providing civilians with an inside perspective and a virtual role in today's premiere land force, the US Army. America's Army players will experience soldiering in a state-of-the-art new manner. The America's Army game blends two vivid simulations: Soldiers, a role-playing portion in which players navigate life's challenges to achieve goals, and a first-person action game, called Operations. The action-packed Operations portion allows up to 32 players to enter into "virtual service" with the US Army on the same unit mission. Players begin their virtual Army experience as a recruit with an anonymous user name to experience challenging Army missions from a first-person perspective. Training missions build player capabilities - from navigating Fort Benning's obstacle course to parachute drops in preparation for assignment to the

82nd Airborne Division.

Multiplayer missions are organized into assignment tours, such as being part of the 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) or the 75th Ranger Regiment. To join a multiplayer game, the players must complete the appropriate training. Gamers use realistic equipment and authentic military hardware. Teamwork, leadership and the benefits of training are emphasised. As well as all that, we've also included the official manual for this admittedly surprisingly complex game, as a PDF on CD02.



**Requires:**  
P3-300  
32MB RAM  
16MB Videocard  
600MB HDD

## DVD ONLY!

## BIKINI KARATE BABES

**Smack them down with your mammaries!**

Okay so this is pretty crap, but we figure you deserve it. Back away from your monitor, about 20 inches or so. Use gloves. Wear a fireman's suit, as they're usually made from rubber and can be hosed down in a matter of seconds. Do not invite your friends over to play this game with you; they might take it the wrong way. Anyway, according to the readme, Bikini Karate Babes has action, comedy, sex appeal and strategy - all wrapped up in a tight little package! Play up to 19 bouncy, leggy, aggressive, silly, mischievous and sexy characters, until you get bored and drift away. Each character has a unique personality and is modelled from real images of actual (presumably out of work) women in outrageous combat. Bikini Karate Babes animates at 60 FPS, using actual video images that you control in real time. This game is a sure contender for most outrageously sexist game of the year. It may even beat DOA: Beach Volleyball!

**Requires:**  
P2-300  
32MB RAM  
16MB Videocard  
500MB HDD





## NEW DEMO! BLACK HAWK DOWN

An updated version of this incredibly popular game

Set in Somalia in 1993, Delta Force: Black Hawk Down is based upon and around the Operation Restore Hope and Task Force Ranger campaigns and follows members of the elite Delta Force and US Army Rangers as they participate in a number of daring raids against the oppressive Somali warlords in and around Mogadishu.

This updated official demo contains a new singleplayer mission called "Diplomatic Immunity" as well as a multiplayer Capture-the-Flag map.



**Requires:**  
P3-500  
192MB RAM  
32MB Videocard  
400MB HDD

## HOMEPLANET

It's not Homeworld but it's very, very close

A classic space fight simulator, based on a real Newtonian physics model and similar to games like the X-Wing series, Wing Commander and Freespace. Homeplanet is a space fight simulator, of which the plot is based on a Neuro gameworld. The Troiden Clan is a Klouto outcast. Its members have to leave the planet and plunge into the search for a new home. The main character is a Troiden clan pilot. The main objective is to save the clan. Can't hardly argue with that now can we? This demo gives a taste of singleplayer gameplay.

**Requires:**  
P2-800, 256MB RAM,  
GeForce3, 400MB HDD



## DVD ONLY! JURASSIC PARK

A dinosaur tycoon game that actually looks good!

Jurassic Park is the first ever mission-based world-builder, giving you the choice between two distinct gameplay styles. A detailed world-building engine allows you to build and manage your own Jurassic Park, while a series of missions challenge your action gaming skills.

Jurassic Park: Operation Genesis claims to deliver a level of game quality and depth never before reached in any previous Jurassic Park title. The demo contains three missions, a Site B park and the Jurassic Park Dinopedia.

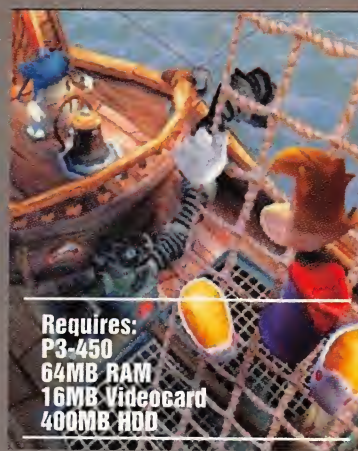
**Requires:**  
P2-350  
64MB RAM  
16MB Videocard  
150MB HDD



## DVD ONLY! RAYMAN 3

The French. Someone really ought to stop them

Rayman 3 Hoodlum Havoc's gameplay offers a fresh and exhilarating experience to the action-adventure genre. Rayman explores never before seen regions inhabited by off-the-wall creatures. Rayman 3 Hoodlum Havoc is not only an epic quest, but also a whimsical comedy unveiling a rich tale of cartoon fantasy adventure. This demo features three levels of Ubi's Rayman 3: Hoodlum Havoc. The gameplay offers a fresh and exhilarating experience to the action-adventure genre (Didn't you already say that? Nice to bookend the article I guess... - Ed)



**Requires:**  
P3-450  
64MB RAM  
16MB Videocard  
400MB HDD

## NASCAR 2003

I think we have to turn left up here...

NASCAR Racing 2003 Season includes a new sound system and claims photo-realistic graphics. The enhanced AI automatically adjusts to match the player's driving ability and inspired by the real world of NASCAR Cup racing, drivers can also choose to compete against a full field of 42 NASCAR drivers online via Internet or LAN in NASCAR Racing 2003 Season. The demo allows you to race in 2 different races and in two modes: Single-race and testing session.

**Requires:**  
P3-500  
128MB RAM  
16MB Videocard  
300MB



## DISC VIRUS SCANNING

All files on CD PowerPlay and DVD PowerPlay are scanned with PC-Cillin 2003. For more information please visit: [www.manac.com.au/VirusCheck](http://www.manac.com.au/VirusCheck)





## Yellow Boots

# GAMES FOR PETS

Twenty evil cats not affiliated with Playboy Inc

Okay so before we begin I have to explain that I have a cat thing. I'm assured by the second year med student who does my brain work that it isn't an actual phobia, in that I'm still able to function around cats, but at times I do get a bit shaky. It's the way they look at you, as if you're almost but not quite nothing more than a mobile scratching post with bad personal hygiene. And the eyes. The terrible eyes.

In fact, part of the reason the Relationship with the Girl broke down so catastrophically, aside from the thing with the PSX electrocuting everything in a six metre radius and the rising damp in the basement apartment we called home, and the fact I hadn't washed any clothes for six months and the pile was challenging the tower of likewise unwashed dishes for supremacy, apart from all this, the reason I now live alone (albeit in a much nicer flat) is because the Girl brought home a kitten, a tiny little kitten. And the day I woke up with that kitten asleep on my face, one claw tucked idly into my left nostril, was the day I packed my bag and moved into my parents' executive top floor apartment in sunny Balmain.

All this talk of cats is not just by the by, as my assignment for this month had me travelling to the charming wine-growing town of Mudgee, where the parks are full of blossoms and the locals are full of grog. A brave new developer (aren't they all?) called, oddly enough, Stewards of Eden, had come up with what was either a brilliant or completely harebrained new concept in PC entertainment: a game for pets.

I met Stewards of Eden in a nicely appointed home on Cedar Avenue, not too far from the bowling club, thought I can't remember either names or the faces of the development team because the tasteful sitting room into which I was ushered was entirely filled with cats. There were cats on the sofa, cats on the leather recliner, cats on the mantelpiece, cats sharpening their claws on the antimacassars, cats on the windowsills, even a small tabby dangling from the 20s-style central overhead light fixture. The cats had all been doing their own inscrutable cat things but as I entered, twenty heads swivelled on oiled necks, and twenty pairs of eyes regarded a region just to the left of my right ear which, I'm told, is commonly occupied by the human soul. These cats had my number. They also smelled a great deal.

My eye began to twitch, the way it does, and the boots tried to shuffle backwards out of the room, but I stood firm. I had a job to do. I was nothing if not dedicated to my slim retainer and seldom realised promise of free games from the Editor. Such was my intense mental focus and resolve not to piss-bolt, and such was the quality of the wine that was continually being poured into the enormous glass I'd been given on entry, that after a while it seemed as if the cats themselves, and not the developers, were talking about their new game, Petcetera.

"Oh yes," said the cats "we believe there is a vast untapped market in gaming. We're talking about games for pets. There are plenty of virtual pet games, where a person can substitute a real live animal -" at this twenty paws pointed at twenty furry chests - "with a digital AI routine. Our game more or less does the reverse. It's targeted at pets who would prefer a digital owner over the mess and inconvenience of a real one."

Twenty tails gently waved me to a heavily modded P4 jammed in the corner of the dining room past a veritable minefield of litter boxes. I noticed there was quite a lot of hair on the screen.

"Press E for Evade Owner," said the cats. I hastened to oblige. A highly detailed 3D art

student appeared on the screen, scrabbling under a rendered couch, obviously trying to get a hold of a wayward animal to force a worming tablet down its throat. I pressed E again, and a nearby lamp stand fell onto the art student's head, first concussing and then electrocuting her. A little gold star appeared in the bottom of the screen, span around excitedly, and then joined a pile of gold stars in the menu bar. Other options included "(S)tay outside in the rain even though it's clearly just to be contrary when there's a nice warm box waiting inside for me" and "(D)estroy sentimentally valuable personal effects in order to get attention when a simple meow would have sufficed."

"This is running on a Radeon 9700 is it?" I asked mildly. The cats grinned. I got scared, and pulled heavily from my wineglass.

"We have support for more than 20 different kinds of owner at this stage," the cats went on, "including a six year old girl who always wants to dress you up in dolly's clothes and force you to sleep in a frilly shoebox, a teenage boy who incessantly shoots you with a spud-gun and then cries when you bite him on the face, a middle-aged single man obsessed with administering suppositories, a veterinary student who wants to try out a series of new and explosive laxatives on you, and finally a weird woman who just keeps bringing in more and more strays from off the street, and you have to battle them in a sort of UT2003 arena mode."

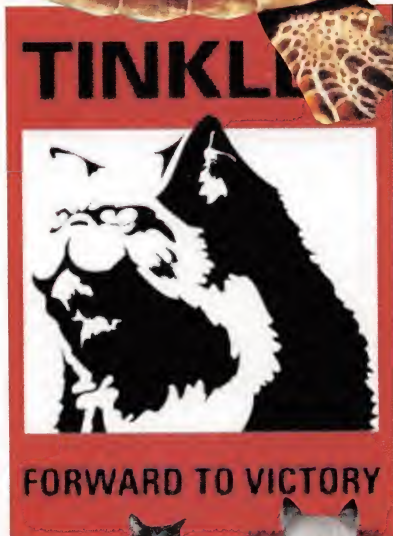
"Right," I said, "So when you get this game published, will there be any pets out there who will actually have any money with which to buy it?"

There was a long and dangerous pause. Someone took my wineglass away, but I couldn't be sure whether they were human. The cats did that stare, you know that stare, that stare a cat does when you approach it with hand outstretched to pat and it looks at you and flicks the very tip of its tail, just once, so you turn quickly around and pretend to have urgent business in the next room. Someone coiled between my legs, and then someone else jumped off a hall table and hit me in the chest, sending me crashing to the floor like the overweight potato monster I so obviously am.

What happened next was so unspeakably awful it was almost, but not quite, worse than the state of my good suit which I had owned for six years but had never dry-cleaned ever. It involved the litter boxes and my signed Quake 3 T-shirt where the signature had long since faded under a heavily layered crust of caffeine stains.

See, this is why I have this cat thing. All I can say is I hope the Girl, the ex-Girl, is happy in her basement apartment without my pile of dirty laundry, tower of washing up, crazy ex-third flatmate's VHS porn collection, badly chipped semi-lethal PSX, but with instead only her insufferably cute homicidal kitten for comfort.

Incidentally if you're ever in Mudgee, avoid getting into an all-night wine-tasting binge. It'll haunt you for the rest of your days.

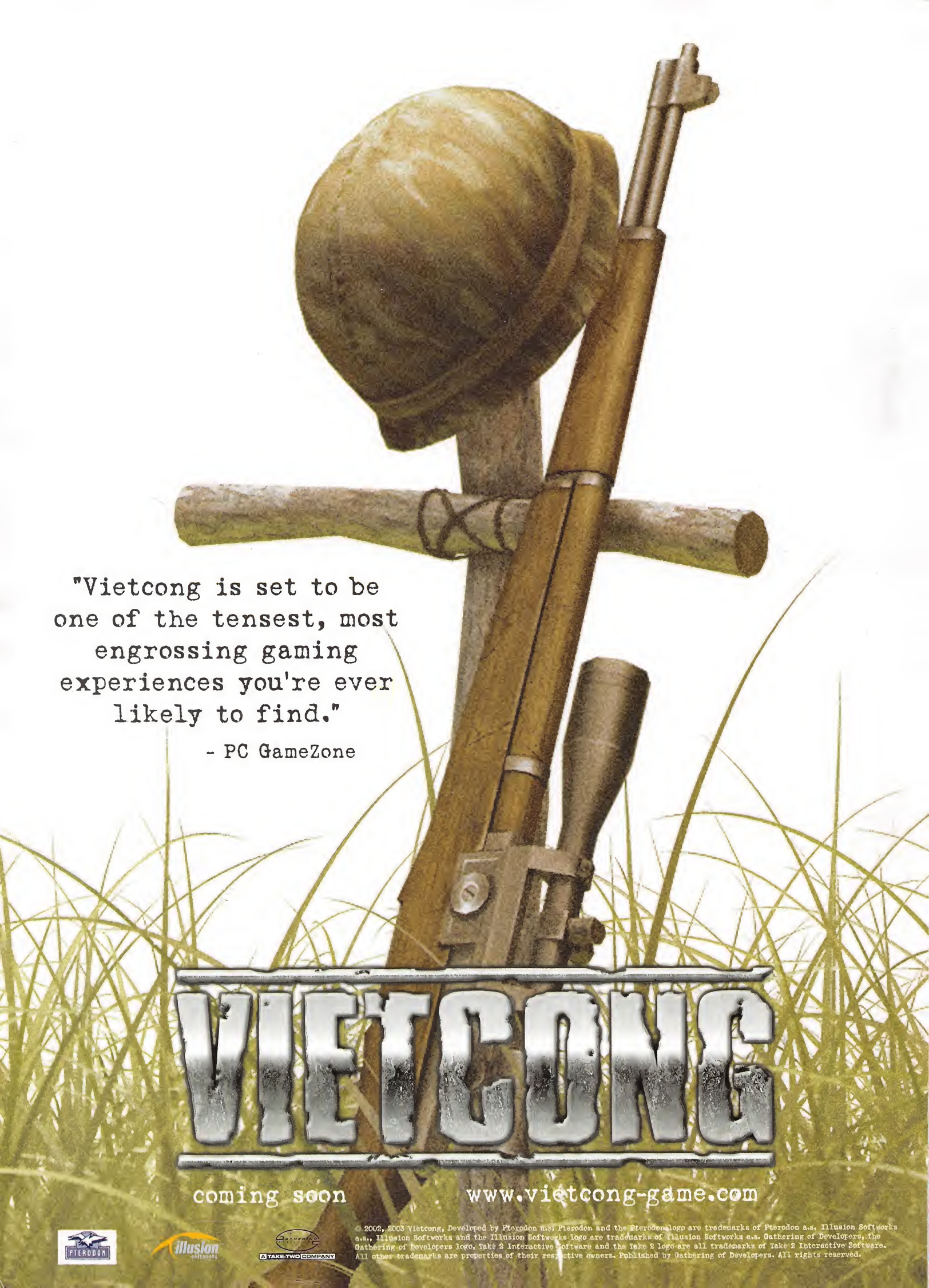


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